

REFORMING CULTURALLY MANDATED MARRIAGE NORMS USING AN EQUITABLE

BIBLICAL MODALITY:

A PASTORAL COURSE FOR NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
2. THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	31
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	95
4. PROJECT DESIGN	193
5. OUTCOMES	213
BIBLIOGRAPHY	220
VITA	234

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ABSTRACT

The Research is motivated by the unprecedented influence of cultural backgrounds of the Traditional Tribal Religions and the Islamic Religion on the Nigerian Christian Families. The Church and many Christian Homes, which may include elders and Pastors Homes, are rather obedient to the rules and regulations that come from the culturally learned style of family life than the absolute word of God that guides the believers in their new found faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Achieving maturity above the cultural influences on our families becomes a gradual reluctant process or no growth at all because the church has remain adamant and seems to have accepted and values the cultural treatment in Christian homes. The issue is believers worship and lead in the church but at home practice something deferent. The fact is the church has given prominence to the cultural activities that are not consistent with the Christian family values and therefore has given power for the ill treatment of the wives.

The question therefore is that should the home be govern by culture that come from traditional Tribal gods and Islam or by the biblical principle. How should our Christian homes look like? The research tried to uncover some behavior of many Christians who go to church but at home practice cultural principles of marriage. He looked at how the Christian marriage should be like by using the marriage course by Nicky and Sila Lee, the Alpha authors is reformulated to bring a corrective to marriages in the hope that these dehumanizing features of Nigerian culture can be submitted to the grace and power of God, and be transformed. A good and careful look at the Theological reflections of St. Paul's understanding of marriage found in 1

Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5:21-33, was vital to the understanding of the Marriage issues that are problems in the church of Nigeria. A counseling model is developed to help the laymen believers help those weak families that are struggling with this influence of culture. It will help spread the understanding of the marriage course and reformation of the Nigerian families.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The Nigerian Christian is born in a cultural setting that influences what he does even after he has faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. One would expect that, once Christ has been received as Lord and Savior there should be a dramatic “u-turn”(that is a complete change) from the old ways of life which this writer calls, “chronic influences” experienced from birth that do not reflect the new claimed faith in Christ.

Though it might be a gradual process of maturity to stand above the cultural influences learned over a long period of time, the power of God, zeal and the willingness to surrender one’s self to Him, In Nigerian culture, the family of origin often competes with the new found faith in Jesus in such way that the new believer is torn. This tearing is between the attitude of forgiveness experience in Church and unforgiving spirit at home. The humility that is expressed in the Church and the hostility at home against the wife especially. Galatians 5 presents typically what happens.¹ In the Church there is that expression of love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and the likes. But in the house a complete opposite. Behaviors like strife, fits of anger, rudeness, lack of good

¹ Galatians 5:16-25.

communication, ungentle and harsh, keeps record of wrongs, unappreciative, not helping the wife by letting her do all the work as a slave, etc.

The issue here is the fact that people who worship God and may even be Church leaders, function well just in the Church while at home, most families, practice something different from what they profess in church. Things like, domestic violence against the wife, preferential treatment to mother over the wife, preferential treatment of the male child especially if he is first born, allow the melting of insults or maltreatment of the brothers and in-laws. It is with heavy heart to see that, in many Christian families, culture has been given upper hand as against the biblical principles of Christian family life.

The elite, in trying to talk about the African culture, have complicated issues than solving those cultural misshapes at home. In an article posted on the web site by Maafa: African Holocaust, defining marriage said, "Marriage is one thing that unites African culture, although two marriages will never be similar. You can marry in a Church, a mosque, in the bush, by a priest, an Imam, Minister of justice, under water, in a tree, the core thing is marriage is a contract of commitment with rules and regulations that represents the persons culture."² By this article you see that personal cultures are placed supreme. Whatever the people come up with stands.

How can the Church survive this ridiculous enemy of the Scriptures that directs all marriages and homes to be guided by personal culture? The news continues that "It is a communal relationship, a rite of passage which bonds two

² "African Marriage," Maafa: African Holocaust, accessed January 27, 2013, http://africanholocaust.net/news_ah/africanmarriageritual.html.

people and enshrines obligations and values. And even while people may get divorced there are guidelines and ethics in every culture for governing all aspects of married life.”³ The question that the Church must answer is, “Should we govern the home by cultural settings or by the biblical principles?” they said marriage is dignity and true sign of commitment. That it defines our humanity and contributes to making us more human.⁴ Can anything that do not put God first, that He dictate what happened, achieve any dignity? How does that possibility contributes to humanity when there is already the tendency of divorce that is based on the cultural setting of the people involved. The church will remain a place that people believe you can practice God and one’s culture unless we can answer the question “should we govern the home by cultural settings or by the biblical principles?”

One major mistake the Nigerian church has committed and has not yet realized is the fact that, in the Ministers hand book on marriage contraction, the pastor asks, “Who gives this woman to be married to the man?”⁵ and if there is no one from the family to present the lady to the man, as it is in Nigerian culture, by implication, it means the parents and the family, the relation have not consented to the wedding to the man. This could be because the family doesn’t like him and his family and the lady is insisting to marry him, lack of paying complete bride price and meeting up traditional conditions before marriage could be another, it means no

³ “African Marriage.”

⁴ “African Marriage.”

⁵ The Minister in trying to obey the ECWA Ministers Handbook which clearly states that a man from the woman’s side must hand her over to the pastor before marriage is contracted, indicating surrender.

marriage as far as the family is concern. A woman not given in marriage by her biological parents renders the marriage illegal. The entire family will reject and disown her. Therefore, in the final words of the representative, the man giving the lady will say, "From today you are now married to John (not real name) and his family. Our family is not lazy, does not steal, etc. so we should not hear that you practice such vices."⁶ By this statement, the entire family of John surely will have control over her supported by the fact that, the Pastor has said no marriage without the surrendering of the Lady's family to the Man's family. The pastor normally continues by saying, "Miss Jessica (not real name), after today, you no longer belongs to your parents family anymore, Mr. John's family now becomes your family."⁷ In this statement the pastor completely agrees with the culture, that the woman now married the entire family of the husband who assume authority over.

Reading from the book of Genesis chapter two, is clear that, Adam in response to what God has done for him, he looked at the woman and said; "this is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be call Woman because she was taken out of man; Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and be united hold fast to his wife, and they became one flesh"⁸. The Passage is so clear to those who want to do the right thing. It is the man that leaves his father and mother and be united with his wife, not the other way round. The implication is that The

⁶ The appointed man from the Lady's family to represent the father or the father himself says it, but is rear.

⁷ The officiating Minister interpreting the ministers handbook.

⁸ Genesis 2:23-24.

Bible is replaced with what it does not say. This gives a false sense of authority over the woman. It makes the woman in the family demoralized because she feels she is less important in the family. But for the husband, the man assumes control of ownership based on the cultural setup that man is highly superior to the woman.

The writer thinks God was not blind to the fact that man will always want to go beyond his limit by exercising his powers. God gives a strong message to reduce the authority of man as he humbly leaves his family domain of authority to be with the wife. To the African Nigerian culture, exchanging loyalty from family to wife, will be “over my dead body”⁹ as openly said by those who believe it is a taboo to do so. Such a cultural understanding of marriage plays a great role in damaging the joy and peace of marriages. Many Christian women end up just staying either because of the children or because if they leave they will be seen and called prostitutes. It is actually a shame in Africa for a woman not to be with a husband. Nobody will believe that she is not behaving immorally. It has become a fact therefore that, in “Marriage in Africa: Women are unable to divorce easily...for many African women, divorce is not an option.”¹⁰ In fact, “Even when a woman is widowed, it is the male relatives who decide her faith. Rural widows are not even allowed to remarry. It is only the urban elite, women who have jobs and money, who can decide their future, but the rural women are still not empowered.”¹¹ The simple reason is that she will be looked at as a harlot and nobody will easily marry her except he is of a like mind. It is believed

⁹ This means he rather dies than him to yield to this phenomenon of man leaving to his wife.

¹⁰ “African Marriage.”

¹¹ “African Marriage.”

that for her to be cared for there must be a man. But the elite women in the city do whatever they want; even if the in-laws and relations talk they don't care because she has the money and power to do whatever she likes despite any intimidation activities. What a slavery of the African woman.

It is amazing the response Jesus gave the Pharisees who came to ask Jesus about divorce with a clear intent to trap Him. The question is, "is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any reason or cause"¹² This was a trickiest question. Cases of marriage and divorce were numerous and perplexing. They were made so by the desires, lust and follies of men and often people fix what they will do before they even ask for advice. The Pharisees were exhibiting that, with a deliberate act to trap Jesus. Jesus' wisdom and knowledge made the answer clear by referring to the law than the conflicting two schools of thought that existed at that time. Jesus has just delivered a sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes concerning the sanctity of marriage as indissoluble. In regard to a man divorcing his wife, this is focused by the Pharisees question "for just any reason." The question was not on the legitimacy of divorce but on the fact that there were the School of Hillel, who was the grandfather of Gamaliel, a famous teacher of Saul of Tarsus. He was a gracious diplomatic person in looking at issues. He prefers easier course of action in resolving problems. On the other hand, there was the School of Shammai who was more strict, interpreting the law with all seriousness. The question of "any reason" was clearly to trap Jesus who has just taught "no divorce," while the two schools says yes to divorce, one with

¹² Mathew 19:3.

stringent reasons, the other, with just “any reason.” Jesus used His wisdom, not supporting either schools of thought, appealed to the Bible, the creation. He emphasized God’s act of creating male and female for the covenant of love. He emphasized their unique equality and oneness in their marriage covenant. For a man leaves his parents and become united to his wife. Two becoming one and therefore man is not to destroy what God has joined together. When the Pharisees ask of why Moses permitted given a certificate of divorce, it was answered clearly, Jesus said, “because of your hardness of hearts.”¹³ Jesus made it clear appealing to the creation that it was not so in the beginning, therefore, whosoever divorce his wife and marries another commits adultery. Jesus here teaches the integrity of persons in covenant. The passage has not any hint that a woman can initiate divorce here. I see rather a connection with the African understanding of women not finding it easy to ever dream of divorce even at the highest mistreatment received from their husbands. While men are thinking on what reason or reasons to divorce their wives, the women think only on the integrity of the marriage. I think in Jesus’ answer to the egocentric masculine nature of man, Jesus here defended the women who are behaving more like the creation. The Bible intended marriage to be as it was in the creation account. Jesus was protecting the women, the wives from the capriciousness of their husband. The African women and wives needs this understanding to serve as comfort and encouragement to maintain the Christian

¹³ Mathew 19:8.

integrity of marriage. Divorce indeed is not answer to marital issues, it is rather complicated by it.

In Nigeria, most women are more of sex and children machines. If the child is not fourth coming then the marriage is dissolved. When only women are born to the family, a second wife must be married otherwise the family lineage does not continue. Because “the African man lives for his people, family and friends, not just for himself.”¹⁴ The family must continue to multiply and if the man does not care, other members of the family do. In some tribes, the man and woman stays together first to be sure she can give birth. By implication, she must be pregnant before marriage arrangements are made. Hence pre-marital sexual activity is not only accepted, it is expected to prove fertility.

In summary, one can simply say the Nigerian woman is like a slave to her husband and family. Anything done to resist this, the family will become chaotic; there will be heated arguments that may lead to abuse and serious violence that can cause the woman death. A story was aired on the radio in September 2001 and was all over the Nigerian newspapers of man who killed his wife during heated arguments because of 200 naira she wanted to cook for family in Lagos. This is one incident among many. There has been several cases of where women have been battered not only by their husbands but also the man’s brothers. Lema in her article titled, 5 ways African Men Can Become Better Husbands said, “I wonder what has happened to those days when there was love. African men are very disrespectful. If

¹⁴ Aladetan, J.O.Y., *Christian Marriage and Family Life* (Bloomington, IN: Author House 2013), 53.

an African man did something that vexed his woman, he feels like saying he's sorry would make him less than a man, so he puts up an attitude , thereby using reverse psychology"¹⁵ This is slavery! Our culture has resulted into making our wives less than human. We have become self-centered and careless about what happens to our wives. The Church must step in to go back to the grassroots to undo what is already seen as a normal way of life by both Church and traditionalist. The Church, believers must distinguish themselves.

Many abuses, molestation, and humiliation of women have not been a new story but what is widely known and seen as normal. The church has not been able to stand out and plan deliberately to attack such great evil to the scriptures and to humanity. Therefore, we see the abuse of women on the increase and faction out in a way that cannot be easily uncovered accepts on rear violence situation that the issue cannot be hidden anymore. The pharisaic nature of the Church has given many families cover. There has to be a deliberate action taken to overcome this spiritual menace in the Nigerian church today. Should this continue? The problem is, should we govern the home by cultural settings or by the biblical principles.

Thus, this writer has tried to uncover some behavior of many Christians who go to church but at home practice cultural principles of marriage. How Church leaders and ministers even promote this behavior by encouraging the fact that woman is completely married to the man's family who takes authority over her. We

¹⁵ Mams Fonkeng quoted in Lema Abeng-Nsah, "5 Reasons Why African Men Make Good Husbands," *Doniamagazine*, October 2010, <http://www.duniamagazine.com/2010/10/5-reasons-why-african-men-make-good-husbands/>.

have looked at the impending danger of traditional wedding before church marriage that creates serious unspiritual condition and puts the church last in marital issues. Women then become sex machines than love mate, and in fact, her being their mainly to give birth to children especially male children and having no authority over the male child. Any effort to go contrary to the above cultural settings, gives room for abuse and violence that has claimed lives. The issue is; Nigerian cultural setting has been given prominence that is not consistent with the Christian marriage. The problem is, should we govern the home by cultural settings or by the biblical principles? With the above mentioned, we now have to take a look at what Christian marriage should look like.

Women in Christian Marriage Need a Sense of Freedom in Christ

When God created a woman, what was His intension? Does the creation say man must dominate the woman? Is it not even ideal to say that the helper deserves more honor and due respect for rendering the assistance? Is not the bible clear that gender has nothing to do with our faith and stand before God the maker? Much is yet to be learned about the freedom bestowed on everyone that have faith in God.

Mark Lee has said in his book *Creative Christian Marriage* that, "Christian marriage is an ideal in the mind of God, made practical by application of appropriate biblical patterns which permits creative approaches to family interests and need."¹⁶ God clearly intends the man and woman be one. In the creation events, God did not

¹⁶ Mark Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light 1977), 6.

take another mud to create a woman, He took from the flesh of Adam, if rightly interpreted, it is clear by the response of Adam “flesh of my flesh...we become one flesh....” Lee has rightly said, “God created Adam and Eve to function as one.”¹⁷ Husband and wife are not to live like divided individuals, they are above mathematical logic of one plus one equals to two. The mysterious logic of God the creator of man and the one who instituted marriage beyond science concludes that, one plus one equals to one, period. Husband and wife are one just as God created man before Eve and like Adam expressed, borne of my borne, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman.¹⁸ A good complement, a help mate, a suitable part of Adam, part of man.

The Hausa language, in Nigeria, “Adam is called “Adamu” which means “nakasa”, belonging to the ground, and also means “an cire daga kasa” meaning taken from the ground.¹⁹ The Hausa understanding of “Adamu” (Adam in Hebrew) is “dan adam (Child of Earth). “Adamu” could also mean “Yan adam duka” (the entire race).²⁰ The interpretation is that, the man ‘Adam’ was made from the ground, the soil and represents the entire humanity. The name “Adamu” should be confused with the AKKad used of “Adamu”, “which is used for blood.... In Old AKKadian and

¹⁷ Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 13.

¹⁸ Genesis 2:23.

¹⁹ ECWA/SIM, *Karmus na Littafi Mai Tsarki* (Jos, Nigeria: ECWA, 2001), 16.

²⁰ ECWA, *Karmus na Littafi*, 16.

Old Babylonian one discovers proper names like A-damu.”²¹ The Hausa explanation of the name Adam agrees with the *Theological World Book* which explains that,

God gave the name “Adam” to the first human being He created. The word mostly likely derives from the Hebrew verb “to be red” and is also related to the noun for “earth” or “ground.” Besides being a proper name, the Hebrew word also means “man,” “human being,” or “humankind” Adam is significance as the father of all humanity. Because we are all descendants of Adam.²²

The fact is that Adam comes from the word “adama” which literally means earth and is derived from the for color ‘red’, referring to the ruddy color of human skin or the color of dirt of the earth. It also means ‘human’ when in the singular and ‘mankind’ when in the plural. Although is never used in Genesis 1-2,²³ However, “there is a wide divergence among modern versions (of the Bible) where the proper name “Adam” first appear in Genesis.... More versions are opting for 4:25 as the first instance because it is the first where “Adam” occurs without the definite article.”²⁴ Therefore, “Genesis itself connects Adam with dama, ground, earth..., and this suggests connection between man’s reddish brown skin and reddish brown soil of the earth.”²⁵ The above explanations are helping to see the fact that God created Adam and Eve (man and woman, husband and wife) to function as one not as divided individuals. We all come from one source, Adam, man.

²¹ Willen A. VanGemen, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 1997), 263.

²² Dion Campbell, Wendell Johnson, John Walvoord and John Witmer, eds., *The Theological Wordbook* (Nashville, TN: Word, 2000), 4.

²³ VanGemen, *NIDOTTE* 1, 263-264.

²⁴ VanGemen, *NIDOTTE* 1, 263-264.

²⁵ VanGemen, *NIDOTTE* 1, 263-264.

“Anthropos,” evidenced from the Mycenaen period, “means a human being, and also a man. The fem. Equivalent is – woman, often in contemptuous sense....”²⁶ While the adjective, “anthropinos” is derivative word meaning human, belonging to humanity.”²⁷ This agrees with the Greek interpretation of “anthropos” – man and the word “anthropinos” – human. The Old Testament Hebrew use of Adam agrees with the Greek use of Anthropos which designate his nature in contrast to God’s and animals, and in secular Greek use of “Anthropos meaning man, as opposed to beasts, or also gods.”²⁸ It is important to note that Anthropos (Greek) corresponding to Adam (Hebrew), “in its generic use it includes both man and woman....”²⁹ The Analytical Lexicon of the Greek further explains the fact that Anthropos, “as a generic term human being, person...; plural people, mankind, one’s fellow men”³⁰ Anthropos is the Greek Latin of human and A’dam refers to a human being and mankind. In Greek, Adam is Adam, but ‘man’ meaning human is Anthropos. It can mean the male. But it means that only in relation to and contrasts with the female. Also the use of the word “man” in Genesis 5:2, and in the King James Bible “Adam” to refer to the single human nature of Adam and Eve as individual persons is a great message

²⁶ Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 564.

²⁷ Brown, *NIDNTT*, 564.

²⁸ Brown, *NIDNTT*, 564.

²⁹ Brown, *NIDNTT*, 564.

³⁰ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2000), 56.

not to be overlooked in marriage.³¹ This use of language was not designed to exhibit male egotism. Rather, the one-flesh unity of man and woman makes it appropriate to signify all people as “Hu-mans” The word stands for a part as well as the whole.³² Hu=earth, man= person, human means the person from the earth and is shortened English use to man, meaning both the male and the female. Therefore, man is a reference to the masculine gender and in marriage clearly refers to the fact that the man and the woman are one.

Marriage is a reunion of what God made in the beginning for man. “God causes the man to sleep and creates a woman from a part of His body (English-language tradition describes the part as a rib, but the Hebrew word *tsela*, from which this interpretation is derived, has multiple meaning; see the Textual Note, below. Describing her as “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, “the man calls his new help-mate “woman” (Heb. *Issa* or ³³*ishshah*), “for this one was taken from a man” (Heb. *is* or *ish*³⁴). This sundering, a making of two from one, predicates reunification in marriage, in which two will be made one: on account of this a man leave his father and his mother and clings to his woman.”³⁵ This being the case a man and a woman actually fulfills the original creation of man as one entity. She is part and parcel of

³¹ Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 13.

³² Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 13

³³ VanGemeran, *NIDOTTE* 1, 537-539.

³⁴ *NIDOTTE* 1, 388-390.

³⁵ Genesis 2:18-25.

man with equal human hood. Women stand out on their own as co-equals in salvation and service to God.

In I Corinthians 12, Paul tells believers that we are the same. Same body, different parts but equal, we are a family. Neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female we are one body in Christ.³⁶ Women must be given that self-esteem, the freedom of serving God joyfully in their homes were they live must of their lives and will stand before God alone for judgment.

Both Man and Woman Are Disciples

You want to practice Christianity and mix that with Nigerian non- Christian tribal practice. This mixture is a form of syncretism that causes many misshapes in the home, we need to disciple both men and women to become husband and wives according to Saint Paul's instructions on marriage in his epistle to the Corinthian Church in chapter 7, the Ephesians in chapter 5, the book of Timothy 3:2 and 12 when Paul was instructing an elder's family should be, the book of Titus 1:6 on a qualified Church worker's family, and the book of Hebrew 13:4 The areas the writer wish to treat are in 1Corinthian Chapter 7 and Ephesians Chapter 5. The basics of the Christian faith are very important in a culture where from birth people are told and grew up right from childhood believing that the male is higher and more important than the woman. He is born to rule.

³⁶ Paul's teachings in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11.

Faith in God goes beyond proclamation or declaration of faith, it includes that innate desire to know and respect the word of God “in toto.”³⁷ A Nigerian Christian home should be seen making deliberate effort to implement, in another word, put into practice, the word of God with particular attention paid to the organization of marriage and parenting as revealed in the Bible. Though by such doing, his family members who are not Christians will ridicule him, mock him literally and in many cases avoid him as a foolish person who allows the wife to control him. Even some Christian family members will join in ridiculing the Christian husband who practices a mutuality of respect and honor to the wife as a fellow disciple of Jesus Christ.

The usual reaction of people especially family members when the man live in harmony and respecting the woman, as he treats her as one, is the fact that, “he has been charmed and control by the woman”³⁸ This means that the man is not doing what he is doing in the home by his own volition but under control by some body through manipulation by the woman.

One question that needs to be answered is where this ill-treatment of women are coming from culturally. In Nigeria we have two major religions, Christianity and Islam. But we also have multiple Tribal cultures that come from various tribal groups with their specific cultural emphasis and beliefs. We generally call them unbelievers, who worship clan or family idols. Each pagan family have their own god or gods they worship and may have rules and regulations different from the

³⁷ A Latin word to mean in totality.

³⁸ It is a taboo to be equal with the woman, it therefore looks strange that the man will do such a thing when every man is firm and resolute in exercising his manly authority.

other neighbor, though staying in the same village or locality. The entire village, with different gods and cultures is harmonized by the village high priest or chief and elders. The ill treatment of women in Nigeria and the cultural influence of Christian homes come from both Tribal Religions/cultures and the religion of Islam. For example, there are many incidences, even in our modern time, where children between 10 to 16 years are forced into marriage by their parents, either as a gift or sign of friendship, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. In many cases, they are married to old men who are already having a wife or wives. Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) Jankwano Hospital is full with cases of VVF from the Muslim communities in the North because of child abuse of early marriage. Islam also sees women as property than co-owners of one another. Never values one flesh, one borne, one blood. This religions, with their beliefs and culture, contributes a lot to the ill treatment of the Nigerian woman. Our house of Representative and the Senate have struggle with bringing laws that will control these and many more ill-treatment of the women cases. The worse is when believers allow themselves to be lead and guided by these cultural influences in their own Christian families.

The Researcher has observed that, genuine believers, who truly want to obey God in their family matters, is always a war between the Christian family and the parents, brothers and sisters, the extended family members, the clan and the villages of both the man and woman. Even those who know Christ and are still respecting family cultures among those mentioned above, constitute a serious problem to those who have decided for Christ completely. This are the people who come to park their brother's properties kicking the widow out of the house at the death of the husband, their brother. This is just but one example out of many.

Men need courage to separate themselves from the world and its wickedness and be different. Nigerian culture cannot dictate the pace, the church must. "The concepts of leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh"³⁹ has been abused; there is a need to go back to Biblical statements that clearly define the marriage life of any Christian family no matter where you come from. The Biblical passages that reveal what Christian marriage is to be like includes; 1 Corinthian chapter 7, Ephesians chapter 5, 1 timothy chapter 2:2 and 12, Titus chapter 1:6, Hebrew chapter 13:4 and 1 peter 3:7. This writer will pay attention to 1 Corinthian 7 and Ephesians 5.

Paul the apostle never left the church in doubt of what the creation meant in the life of the family. He exposes and corrected many family problems that came up in the life of the church. He dedicated passages in I Corinthian 7 and Ephesians 5 especially, to tell the church what marriage means and who is responsible for what as the two are one together. He set up orderliness in home.

So if the culture must be overcome or transformed, first we must give ourselves to God, trusting Him that he established the marriage and our homes for deliberate outcome, and the listening to Him through His Word (both Jesus and the Holy Scripture) and his disciples is the only option we have for our family happiness. The only weapon to overcome culture, knowing that we must not join two allegiances because we can never be faithful to the two, is to go back to the scriptures. Book titles, The God's are not to blame, the writer read in secondary school declared, "Two masters cannot drink into the same bucket, they will knock

³⁹ Wayne A. Mark 1999, page

horns.”¹⁴ We can’t keep culture at one hand and the bible at the other. We must decide deliberately who we are to follow, culture or the bible.

The Setting of Christian Marriages in Nigeria

The setup of the Christian marriage in Nigeria is more of a combination of culture and the church. But there seems to be another coming up. Those who do not want that of the Church, find it easier either to combine both culture and the civil marriage or go by civil marriage, referred to in the Nigerian context as the ‘court marriage.. All this is facts of the unwilling mind to surrender to God’s laid down principles of marriage.

The main problem I am addressing is, should we govern the home and marriage by cultural settings or by the Christian biblical principles? Almost all marriages in Nigeria do what we call “traditional marriage.’ It is guided by cultural standards purely. First, both the man and then woman will go to introduce themselves to their parents and relations who most give approval to either they should be married or not. If the parents’ consent to their wish, then the man will be told to proceed with the payment of engagement fee, this is a small amount of money given to the father of the future bride. By accepting, the father is giving permission. Currently this fee is about 100-500 naira and in some tribes with preliminary items like crates of minerals and wine, cola, goat and chicken, rice, etc. well noting is the fact that these items varies from tribe and clans and family practice of the couples to be.

Once the money is accepted, the man will then be told, when ready, all the necessary things to bring to the girls family. In Nigerian context this is called the

bride-price. At this point you need to know that all the marriage arrangements of what to bring or not to bring are the family affairs not the parents. In fact, parents at this time have nothing to say before and during the marriage property regulations. The man may be asked to bring things like; Money ranging from 250,000 to above a million, 10 or more bags of salt, 2 or more goats, 1 or more cows, wrappers, gallons of red and grannut oils, many tubas of yams, crates of minerals and wine, etc. items to bring mostly depend on where you come from.

To those who are Christians, two programs are held. One is the traditional wedding which is done at home with the relations gathered to perform traditional rights. That is the day that the family says to the girl, good bye! She is handed over to the man family.

The benefits of the 'bride price' for the Nigerian context, which is similar to the same practice in Israel both in the old Testament and in the time of Christ is; First it shows the man is responsible. Second it shows the family will not give their daughter just to anyone. Third after paying all this, the couple believes they may live together and engage in sexual activity before a Christian marriage ceremony has occurred.

The problem then is once the bride price has been paid, the man and his family believes or feels they have purchased the wife. This pose a serious problem to the Church. The problem then is where is the church? Can the couple live together without God's blessings? What happen to those who have the fear of God, will they stay apart until church marriage is done. But how faithful can they be to God? The issue becomes clear that right from marriage time, culture has been given priority, an undue importance that later hunts us.

The problem is, should we govern the home by cultural settings or by the biblical principles? After marriage is completed, either in the cultural way or in the church, which principles of family living should control us? If you say no to culture, you have problem with the relations, if you say no the church, you have problems with the Church. You then see clearly Christian homes practicing syncretic Christianity. Combining two cultures and trying to pay allegiance to both. How can this work?

In the next section, I specifically identify seven features of the problem I am here addressing. These are:

- Men act one way in the church and another way at home.
- Women do not have power to say anything at home.
- How men relate to their children.
- Disrespect from the sons to the Mothers.
- Preferential treatment for the first born son and all the males.
- Disrespect of the daughters by both the fathers and the sons.
- The problem of in-laws in the Nigerian context.

Men Act One Way in the Church and Another Way at Home

What is obvious in this is the fact that, the same people in the Church are the same people who practice culture in their homes. The same person who just sang God loves, God forgives, God has His standard of living, would be the same person maltreating his wife, even with serious beatings like the story below of an active so called spiritual elder in charge of one ECWA Good-news Church in Abuja Nigeria. He

might be an elder, he might even be a pastor, but Christianity has been compromise. He is only one out of many that we do not know.

Seven years ago the writer had an elder who was acting in place of the pastor of the church before he arrived. He was highly respected in the Church; he was open minded, sincere and active by our view of him. He was very charismatic and could move people. His wife was very active in the Church, and their children had good understanding of the Bible. She actually was our Children Sunday School teacher and leader. At the writer's arrival as the Church pastor, he became the pastor's assistant. So far that the writer knew, he was a good Christian and good husband, who was actually dedicated to God's work. Everyone in the church held him in high esteem and believes whatever he said. He was actually everywhere, and does almost everything in the church. Generally we saw a happy enviable family. The case was that, in 2003, one Sunday evening, Juliana Peter (name not real) visited the Pastor's house and demanded seeing him alone. The Pastor thought to himself, well it must be for children Sunday school materials, so he motioned, 'lafiya kwa?', that is 'is everything okay? She laughed and said 'badamuwa' that is 'no problem'. This is typical of our people, even if one is dying and you ask is everything okay, the response is affirmative. The pastor invited her to his library within the same house as they sat; she took about ten minutes before she spoke a word.

'Pastor', she said, 'what I want to tell you, I have been living with it for the past 20 years. I have never shared with anybody including even pastors like Rev. Adamu Yari renown man of God , (name withheld), of ECWA pastor in Jos Good-news Church, even though we were close to him, because it might lead to separation if my husband notice I shared with any one. My husband has been a leader since in

Jos, but is not the person you all think he is'. I can't tell anybody because if he knew I did, that will be my end. She paused in tears and managed to say, 'do you know that my husband beats me? You see that I am pregnant, do you know he beats me, kicking me around even with this pregnancy?' At this time the pastor was actually sad, surprised and angry he felt like going straight to box him, man to man, because really the woman was very dedicated in training the Church children, really nice woman.

Look sir, even yesterday, he kicked me around beating me in the presence of my children not caring that I am pregnant and anything can happen. Don't you see that the children don't join us in the car to church? They are scared of him; they are not free at all. It then dawned on me as a pastor that I have failed, because all she said were noticeable but none of us could ever imagine such things with his activeness and openness in the church, the felt bad.

Another dilemma was that, she continued, I have tried that we should join our account together so that we can build our house at home he refused, I tried that we should change our car he refused. He has always insisted that he is the man so he will not share his man hood with a woman. Actually in Africa, especially among Yoruba's, it is a disgrace to the man that the woman should provide or contribute to the family. A proud man will never allow such to happen.

Fill with surprise and anger; the pastor demanded that they should pray, he led the prayers, then asked her, 'what can we do?' Could we take the risk to talk with the man? Or should the pastor take the matter to the board of elders, more so that he has felt that the pastor's coming has weakened his control over the church, and had find ways to frustrate the in many areas? The pastor thought to himself, what an

opportunity to remove the man from leadership [this thought was not disclosed to her]. The woman insisted, 'he must not know that I have told you this otherwise that will be the end of the family. What a problem!

The pastor decided that they should give it time to think on ways to approach it and pray for God's wisdom. Imagine how the pastor will feel when he sees him around the church claiming spirituality and leading others. It was not funny. In the fourth week of praying, an idea came to the pastor to arrange a dinner or launch with the family outside their home to a restaurant. That was great idea the pastor thought. On the day of meeting, the pastor and his wife and the elder and his wife were well seated. Here we go, the pastor asked everyone to order for anything and let's fellowship and chat and we are down. He was happy, they were happy; the condition was favorable for any discussion. As they were eating the pastor ignited a discussion on family issues, Lucky enough the man opened up, I needed not ask him, he was just confessing and apologizing to the wife. In fact, he shared with us how he has refused the wife to contribute build their house in the village and refuses the idea to buy a new car from her assistance. Wow, it was a great day for the pastor, they discussed, laughed, eat, until nine pm. Amazingly, from that night, his attitude changed favorably toward the wife pastor to share his progress.

Within five months after the meeting with the pastor, they had completed the house and bought a new BMW Car. And there came up a song that goes like this, "with Jesus in our family, happy happy home, happy- happy home, happy -happy home, with Jesus in our family, happy happy home, happy happy home, happy happy home"¹⁵ so she sang as they met with the Pastor.

This is just one out of hundreds of women in the Church that have no peace, no joy of marriage, and yet they can't express themselves otherwise they will end up being beating or frustrated by so many African device means of torture. Lee has recommended that "troubled marriages ought to be counseled early in their development."⁴⁰ The story related above could have been taken care of earlier than this but for the fear of the woman, it made the situation grow worst.

Women Do Not Have Power to Say Anything at Home

After the time of marriage has been contracted under the dominance of culture as discussed earlier in the introduction, what happens next? Many things! Already the woman has been psychologically been traumatized. She has been told clearly who has authority over her and those she must respect by greeting them every morning before she does anything else. Though to her, it has become normal, because right from home, from the earliest years, she was coarse and brain washed to believe that she was less than man. The disaster taught the man is "he is higher and more important than the mother who gave birth to him. The sisters in the family worship him.

Let's look at some analysis here of what happens at home as regard to work. From morning to evening, it is the woman that works. The man only does one thing, the rest the woman must do. From five o'clock every morning, the woman wakes up to clean the house, the environment, the toilet, etc. she puts water for the man to

⁴⁰ Lee *Creative Christian Marriage*, 60.

bath and bath the children preparing them for school. She makes sure the food is ready, and when everyone is ready, they all go to farm including her. Once they come back from farm, she goes to bring water for the man to drink as she prepare again bathing water for all the family members and she will be the one to carry the water to the bath room.

Immediately after that she begins evening food for the family. Make sure everyone is satisfied and she packs the dishes and washed them before she sleeps. In the middle of the night also comes the man looking for sex which is not motivated by pleasure that gives room for play, but just children. One family could have 5-9 and even 16 or more from the same mother. What a frustration that has led many women to their early graves. Meanwhile, the man wakes up early in the morning, the first thing he does is to dust his radio to listen to news, go out and greet neighbors around, come back eat and birth, goes to farm come back to bath, eat and watch TV or go to drink with friends and come back to sleep. And the circle continues the following day.

The amazing issue here is that even the educated, the elite do the same. The African man sees himself as the boss, the owner of the property, wife. It is never mutual understanding at all, only frustration all true. And it seems, since it has been learned right from birth, it is normal, a way of life. It is so deep that when you want to help the wife she will never agree in fear that she will be called a witch because she has charmed the husband. That is how bad it is. One Mr. Jonathan testifies that, he use to wash, sweep the house and do other things, but once he married the wife could not let him. Now he is trying to help the wife he finds it difficult because he has already been use to a bossy life'

In decision making, the woman absolutely has no say. In fact it is believed that were men are the woman cannot be there. She is a property that must follow dully every man's instructions. When you visit any church in Nigeria, one sees clearly the separation of the pew, men seats at one side, the women the other. Culture in the church and must pastors and leaders are doing little or nothing to change the situation, may be because they are guilty of the same sin.

How Men Relate to Their Children

To most Africans, especially in Nigeria, to be married to is to have Children. This has made some part of Nigerian men to stay with their partners until they are pregnant before they talk of marriage. If a woman cannot give birth in Nigeria is like, she is a coursed. Most our Pentecostal Churches today have changed their marriage vows to include "For better for best" not any more "for better for worst." During marriage the pray is mostly declarations that the family be bless with a cry of a child by the following years. Many preachers have declared on pulpit that "barrenness is a course". Oh! Many have gotten involved into so many things just to get children because of the rejection and condemnation that goes along with it by the society and even the Church.

Furthermore the issue extends to the fact that the first child must be a boy. One who will continue the linage of the family, one that will take care of the home. Female children, yes thank God they are born but, should not be first. They are weak line.

Disrespect from the Sons to the Mothers

How can a child not grow full of himself in such a condition of giving preferential treatment? It will only take God to change the person. Disrespect to other children especially the females become normal. Their own mother is looked on as inferior by the same child she gave birth to. She is not free to neither talk to him nor send him because then culture placed him high above others and the father is watching to see who disturbs his son. The church must step in, else the gospel is being reduced and family left in disarray.

Preferential Treatment of First Born

It is believed that most of the first born are spoil children. He is not allow to do anything at home, he is the king, the owner of the house, the heir so who dare touch the child. Even the mother has limited rights in tempering with the activities of the child. He is treated special among others. Our culture places so much value on the first son that even among Christian homes, the behavior is the same. Except from those who truly know God and are ready to obey the word that favors are not shown.

Disrespect of the Daughters by Both the Fathers and the Sons

The male child being given high prominence at home, what happen to the females? Imagine yourself to be born to a family as a female ahead of the boy that was born after you, he is being honored, respected and protected than you. He eats first before you, you have no right to beat him even when he offends you, you are to wash his cloths etc. Many times in Africa women have been refused school especially

when the father is poor. Women in Africa, if not now that the fight is on to liberate them, are only good for marriage. Many have been forced to it. While even in school, parents care less especially when it comes to school fees, and there is a limit she could go in her studies.

In many families that the wife only gives birth to female children their mothers have been maltreated and divorced or the man will marry a second wife who goes along clear treatment and rejection of the first wife. Women never had any option than to look unto God for their future days as either children or married women.

The Problem of In-laws in Nigerian Marriage

Having been handed over to the family of the man during wedding and with the orientation she has receive from childhood, a woman goes to the family fully aware of the ordeal behind the whole thing. Her coming to the home is like relieve to the in-laws, "A Servant has come in," next is the pressure to see that she is pregnant. Worst treatment is yet to take unless a baby is born into the family. The environment will be tensed up by the mother in-law.

She is treated as a slave. She does the entire work with other ladies in the family who may help her reluctantly. The in-laws must be greeted every early morning. The boys in the family have right over her, they could send her talk to her anyhow and that is okay even in the presence of the husband. She dare not respond negatively or harshly else the husband will bounce on her for disrespecting his parents and brothers and sisters. The only escape to this treatment is if the couple is not living in the same town with their family house.

How can this deep seated perspective of marriage that has gone deep into the Nigerian Church be corrected and overcome remain an issue to deal with. I have identified seven features of the challenges the Nigerian context presents to Christian marriage. Again these are:

- Men act one way in the church and another way at home.
- Women do not have power to say anything at home.
- How men relate to their children.
- Disrespect from the sons to the Mothers.
- Preferential treatment for the first born son and all the males.
- Disrespect of the daughters by both the fathers and the sons.
- The problem of in-laws in the Nigerian context.

In the next chapter, I will focus on what the Bible has to say to us about these seven identified features, looking in detail at 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5. Then I will apply the corrective insights the Word of God offers. Finally, I will present how the Marriage Course by Nicky and Sila Lee. The Alpha authors can be reformulated to bring a corrective to marriages in the hopes that these dehumanizing features of Nigerian culture can be submitted to the grace and of God, and be transformed.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Theological Reflections on St. Paul's Understanding of Marriage Found in 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5:21-33

The Bible in Genesis, tells us about the creation of the singular human being (man in the NIV 1984) in the image of God.¹ That was not enough because Adam was found to be lonely. God then decided to divide the first human and make a male and a female out of the first human so as to give humanity companionship, with a suitable partner. Marriage must be traced back to this Creation so as to ground the institution of marriage in God's activity in this world. Marriage was instituted by God for men and women. The New Testament has many passages and statements on marriage and family life. The writer has chosen to only focus on two major passages of scriptures that specifically address Christian marriage, 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5:21-23. This is in hope to help the African Nigerian Christians where the influence of culture mingles with Christian principles of marriage causing great harm. Bernard Mayer has said in his book, *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution*, that "sometimes we are blind to the impact of culture on the conflicts we are dealing with, and sometimes we are overcome by it."² Indeed negative aspects of African culture has impacted so much on the Christian domestic life, it is poison to Christian

¹ Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2.

² Bernard Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2000), 71.

marriage and family. One solution is to appeal to an influence that is universally accepted by Christians, which can transform any conflicting condition of mankind. The Bible has stood the test of time and is for all Christians the repository of God's revelation on how we are to relate to each other. The more people try to disprove it, the more it shows itself to be the special revelation of God, sometimes even converting those who attempt to disprove it. God as He is presented in the Bible is in control of the world, were it not so, the world would collapse into the chaos of sin.

In the letters of Paul, we find God's revelation for what He expects from Christian marriage. Before getting deep to insights on marital problems, it will be good to put Paul's writings in context. Looking at the Pauline Epistles, it seems he is not primarily writing documents about marriage. His letters are not treatises on the subjects of marriage, divorce, adultery or incest. Yet these are problems³ that manifested in the churches he planted; but from the Pauline records it seems he would have preferred to remain silent, rather than enter into conflictual dialogue. In most of the Churches he founded, issues concerning marriage and family aroused and the only person qualified to proffer solutions with divine authority was the apostle himself, the human founder of these churches. The Dictionary of Paul and his letters has stated that, Paul did not write treatises on the subject of marriage, divorce, adultery or incest... But there were problems and there were questions, and

³ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 594.

as a result Paul, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, addressed these problems and questions and gave his answers.⁴

This is an assurance that the Nigerian Christians can find succor in Paul's writings. The writer believes that the problems of our culture and Paul's day are not different. They may be in a different time and setting, but the same principles apply.

Looking at the history of the origin of Paul, Where he lived and worked, he should be qualified to deal with marital issues. Paul lived In Greco-Roman world,⁵ thereby giving him an overwhelming authority to address the issues of marriage within that cultural setting and given sound advice using biblical principles. His versatile experience of the Greco-Roman world, his knowledge and belief in Judaism, and his ultimate conversion to Christianity are without measure.

In the Roman world, marriage was understood as being monogamous and was until death do them part. It was "a life-long partnership, and a sharing of civil and religious rights."⁶ This was the understanding but research shows that though marriage was meant for a life time, divorce was permissible (it was John the Baptist's condemnation of Herod's marriage to his sister-in-law that caused him his head). One could divorce for a variety of reasons, such as a simple lack of affection. Legal proceedings were not necessary; a written or verbal letter from any of them could work. Paul also has an experience as one who beliefs in Judaism. Though was born in Roman world, he was also born in a Jewish home where he had to learn the Torah,

⁴ Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 594.

⁵ Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 594.

⁶ *Modestinus Digesta* 23.2.1.

the Jewish beliefs, and customs⁷. From the Bible account, he attended the School of Hillel and studied under a great teacher, Gamaliel.⁸ Paul's education was vast including both Roman and Jewish learning. He had enough discipline to know what was good and bad as far as marriage was concerned.

Some Scholars have tried to disqualify Paul as not being qualified because he was not married. But, there is a great possibility that Paul had been married and lost his wife, since in order to be a Pharisee marriage was a requirement. Especially modern Liberals who criticize Paul of being cruel to women in his teaching,⁹ But Paul elevates the value of women and raises their position in marriage and the home more than is realized. Many too have seen that he was the right person based on his vast experience, education, and call of God. Since there are heated arguments on whether Paul was married or not. Tradition also has it that Paul was widowed from the time of his conversion and call of God. He preferred to stay alone to serve God, this not to say marriage was less important. It is likely that Paul was married otherwise he could not have been a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. As Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe suggests, "He may have been a widower."¹⁰ In fact, marriage is the first criteria in service to God. When given clear instructions to Timothy and Titus of who can be a leader, Paul told them the person must be able to govern his house well.

⁷ Philippians 3:5-6.

⁸ See Acts 22:3.

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 436.

¹⁰ Wiersbe, *Expository Outlines*, 436.

This quality of clear instructions is indication that Paul knew what marriage was all about.

Bases for Christian Marriage as Found in I Corinthian and Ephesians

The Biblical Why do people marry? Do they have any outcome in mind? What informs what they do at home with their wife and children? These and many more questions are important to any man or woman who wants to get marriage. Reading and studying the books of 1 Corinthians & and Ephesians is very important. They give the bases, the foundation of any who wants to be happy and pleases God.

Instruction on Marriage in Saint Paul

To begin with, it important to remind ourselves that, Paul in his letter was dealing with problems that were presented to him¹¹. Starting from this chapter, Paul is proffering solutions to the issues brought to him as the Leader and founder of those Churches. One must keep in mind that the Corinthian Church were noted for its immorality and lack of standards for the home and that Paul was dealing with local problems of the Church¹² which, some we may not face today but the principle will be leaned. Getting the presentation clear deserves that one puts his position in Paul's position, we need to see him addressing specific difficult matters "...not presenting a marriage manual or his systematic thoughts on marriage".¹³ Therefore

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 12:1;16:1.

¹² Wiersbe, *Expository Outlines*, 436.

¹³ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 242.

we will be right in bringing out the issues specifically presented and discussed by Paul in the Corinthian Church located in 1 Cor. 7.

Paul started his discussion by making a categorically definite statement on how the relationship of the Marriage should be between husband and wife (7:1-5). In his next approach, he speaks about Celibacy, in another word, marriage for the unmarried widows (7:6-9). The third section of Paul's presentation is the issue of divorce. He analyze the divorce for those married to believers and those married to unbelievers (7:10-16). In the next section, Paul gave the underlying principle that brought about the discussion, 'remain as you are' (7:17-24). In Paul's final section on the subject matter, he gave a fatherly advice on marriage for the Betrothed and for Widows.

The Relationship between Husband and Wife in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Paul's reference to a letter written to him without stating the content pose a challenge of trying to reconstruct what prompted the response. The matter appears to be the acceptability of Celibacy, which is the acceptability of the physical companionship of woman. But since we are not in preview of the questions presented to Paul, we will go ahead to approach the circumstances as seen stated.

The opening key words and phrases 7:1 and 2, are very vital in this discussion. Understanding them will enhance the clarity of the other passages. "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.' But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." 'The prevalence of

sex immoralities,' this is not so clear.¹⁴ Sin of immorality was not news in the Corinthian Church. One extreme example of this is the man in Chapter 5 who is having sexual relations with his step-mother. Not only will he not be disciplined, but also some in the Corinthian community even praise the man in sin. The situation in the Corinthian Church was fueled by the fact that it was a cosmopolitan city, a center of economics and a gathering place for people of many cultural and religious backgrounds. The most sexually immoral of these religious was Goddess Temple Worship that existed, which gave license for all sorts of immoral acts. William has said "the city of Corinth had a special goddess of sex with her temple prominently located; in it were thousand beautiful maidens for men to indulge their passions as an act of worship."¹⁵ This becomes more meaningful for Paul to ask Christian men to have one wife to whom he is sexually faithful. "Oh the depth of sex which the profligate may sink!"¹⁶ For so powerful an evil influence like this, it was better for Paul to conclude that it is better for each man to have his wife and each wife a husband rather than to remain single and burn with lust.

To avoid being tempted, since it will be easier to fall in the face of the polluted environment, Paul further gave serious instructions. Once marriage has been conducted, both parties are to relinquish their human family life to the other so as to establish their own family community hallmarked by fruitful multiplication, meaning children. One takes the authority of the other. I believe Paul had in mind

¹⁴ Charles B. Williams, *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1953), 121.

¹⁵ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

¹⁶ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

that whoever was interested in sex at the point could have superior reason over the other to yield. C B Williams offers this insight, “husband and wife belong to each other and should respect the rights of each has to the others body-referring to the duty of sex relations.”¹⁷ By implications one’s body, once married, no longer belongs to him or her. One can vividly say they couples are slaves of each other and any objection to the nature of slavery envisaged is disobedience not to each other, but to God’s command for marriage, which has much import for my study of the African context.

The Nigerian African culture, like that of the Ancient Near East, has had to battle this out. Our culture clearly prohibits women to ask for marital sexual intimacy or make any request of the man. He is the boss, what he wants he gets, what he does not want stands. Our women therefore live in subjugated oppression and frustration. It is pertinent to note that most of the sex in Africa is not for pleasure but children and under compulsion in most cases. It is very rare for a woman in Africa to ask for sex, if she does in any either by gesture or talk, she is considered a harlot or otherwise a loose woman. In this circumstance most of our women shield their desires and needs for marital intimacy.

The Church though is aware of this but slow in bringing about change the problem is due to the fact that some Church leaders and members are guilty of the Nigerian cultural practices that denigrate women. Mostly it has been the influence of Western Culture that has made a positive, drastic and forceful needed change in this

¹⁷ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

regard. Sadly, the Church being pious did not stand upright to liberate the situation even with the biblical backing at hand. To the greatest surprise of the Church, there are some members who still keep bedrooms in their own homes, one for the wife the other for the man. When the man needs sex he will go to the woman, if she is not with children or otherwise the woman will be invited to the man's room.

Paul is saying no to the sexual frustration of any party. Married means relinquishing the personal rights onto the partner, otherwise we are commanded to remain single so to not be obliged to anybody. In marriage, no one is absolute to himself; both parties belong to each other. The only excuse given for abstinence from sex is what I call 'permission' of the other. Even on spiritual matters like prayer, for those who hide under spirituality to achieve selfish ends, Paul said, permission must be sought and given otherwise no prayer and fasting. With the corruption of the area, no chance was to be given for trials. When the partner agrees to the time of prayer, Paul warned that it must be for short time if not Satan can strike. All precaution was to be taken.

Celibacy or Marriage for the Unmarried Widows

In the Garden of Eden, it was clear that God said "it is not good for the man to be alone."¹⁸ God made everything and He said it was good, but for the singular human something was still missing. That was companionship, someone to be with the human to help him erase lonely living. In looking at 1 Corinthians 7: 6-9, is it not

¹⁸ Genesis 2:18.

a contradiction to the reason behind the institution of marriage in the first place?

One good reason might be that this happened before the fall of man in chapter three of Genesis. Yet for many immoral behaviors being on the increase, like Martin Luther said, “it is better to marry than to burn.”¹⁹ Though Christians are not to allow themselves to be taken over by selfish immoral desires,²⁰ to be pro-active, Paul encourages that each man should have his own wife, each woman her own husband.²¹ But why celibacy permitted? Will this not bring more sexual elicit act prominent in the Church? Research has shown that some people whether celibate or not prefers to stay unmarried. Luther reported a case of pagan books writings which advocate no marriage preference, “...some have thought that even if wisdom were a woman one should not marry.”²² The writer sees danger in this proposal of the mind. One will rather though not sanctioning it, accept a Roman Soldiers idea when presented with the issue of marriage to encourage the Youths to marry so as to populate the Country responded, “My dear young men, if we could only live without women we would be spared a great deal of annoyance; but since we cannot do without them, take for yourselves wives,”²³ etc. This Roman seems to agree only with the family problems, but also stressing one important thing, can we do without

¹⁹ Timothy F. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 157.

²⁰ 1 Thessalonians 4:5.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 7:9.

²² Lull, *Martin Luther's*, 157.

²³ Lull, *Martin Luther's*, 157.

marriage? Though the Roman was criticized by those around, but they all agreed that "... women were a necessary evil, and no household can be without such evil."²⁴ Though we don't marry primarily for procreation of children, but for mutual harmony and happiness which if we all trust and obey God, every family can be happy and the fears raised by some people will rather be for selfish reasons.

Let the world thinks otherwise of marriage, to Christians, marriage is good and a protection against sin. It remains resolute that he who finds a wife finds a good thing and finds favor from God.²⁵ Luther has been quoted talking about what the world says about marriage, "Brief is the joy, lasting the bitterness"²⁶ What God wills and creates must normally be foolishness to the world, but those who know Him, understands Him, is for their joy and happiness. For Paul to talk about being a celibate and that it is a gift, it must be something more than the blessings that come from marriage. 'Something that deserves abstinence indeed'. Surely, not many people can be seen with this gift of celibacy, if there are, then with an absolute desire to serve God.

Jesus was here from the Father and to do only the father's will. He could not marry because He wouldn't; He had an assignment that was to be fulfilled within a period of time. Marriage was not necessary it was optional to Jesus, He chose not to marry but dedicating Himself to God. Dictionary of Paul and his Letters has it that "singleness, or celibacy, was also an option for Jesus... He never married...He taught

²⁴ Lull, *Martin Luther's*, 157.

²⁵ Proverbs 18:20.

²⁶ Lull, *Martin Luther's*, 158.

that others having the ability to accept celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God...From all data Jesus did not advocate this as the preferred way of life. Rather He viewed celibacy as a charism, a gift bestowed (dedotai) on certain people by God (Mathew 19:10-12)²⁷ Celibacy in away, becomes an optional matter but with a deliberate choice of serving God otherwise the purpose of marriage will be defeated

Studies have shown that there are many forms of celibacy that may or may not be what God intended for a celibate. In Mathew Jesus in response to the Pharisees on issue of divorce said, "for there are eunuchs (celibates) who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs (celibates) who have made themselves eunuchs (Celibates) for the sake of the kingdom of heaven..."²⁸ The response of Jesus here states clearly three type of eunuchs (celibates). Some men were from birth meant not to marry because some physical anomaly prevented them from the ability to have conjugal relations. In this case, the sexual interest in women will be compromised. The second category has to do with those made through mutilation (i.e. castration) by powerful men to be eunuchs either to serve as guards to their wives or for any other reason. The third type talks about people who have been called and have dedicated their lives to serve God. As the writer has says earlier, marriage and our homes are our first responsibilities before any outside ministry work, so indeed, if you want to serve God without family obstacles of caring and thinking of them, like Paul you can

²⁷Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 595.

²⁸ Matthew 19:12.

remain but to serve God only, and surely He will give you the grace to stand strong in faith.²⁹ Are these the only reasons why some men stay without marriage, or live the life of a celibate? There are other types of Celibacy that Martin Luther talks about in his book *Basic Theological Writings*.³⁰ All the others apart of the three highlighted above he calls them

the devil working through men has been smarter than God, and found more people whom he has withdrawn from the divine and natural ordinance, namely, those who are enmeshed in a spider web of human commands and vows and earthen locked up behind a mask of iron bolts and bars.

The statement is sensible that many try to outplay God to do whatever they want for their selfish reason. The writer do not in any way believes Satan can out smart God. He is only skillful in scheming fully knowing the weakness of men not God. God only allows him as He expects man to voluntarily and deliberately choose to do His will.

Taking a closer look at Paul's statements, was he really encouraging the idea of staying without marriage? If marriage was so important that prayer could be suspended because of sex, and that every man should have his wife to avoid immorality couple with the 'Corinthians' problem of immorality that has consumed the city? The words every man should have his own wife, every wife her own husband³¹ is a great message of preference to married life. Marriage is important to

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:32

³⁰ Lull, *Martin Luther's*, 150-154.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 7:2.

Paul because, one could burn with lust.³² As suggested by Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe “...Paul is not suggesting that the only –or main- reason for marriage is physical; for marriage build on physical bonds will fall apart in only a short time,”³³ and the purpose of marriage could have been defeated. Paul is simply saying man and woman in marriage is bond to satisfy each other sexually without hesitation. By sex, God wants to enrich the lives of the couples with pleasure that comes from marriage.

Staying alone could therefore not be what Paul wishes to encourage. David E. Garland has put up an argument which the writer seems to appreciate. He said “why would Paul introduce a canon that scorns sexual intercourse only to refute by insisting on full sexual relationship in marriage (7:2-5)?”³⁴ Paul cannot say in one hands marry given fervent reasons, and at the other hand encouraged that if you want to stay alone you can stay. The writer believes he was using a style of communication to create understanding of his hearers. David described the Corinthians believe when he said,

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman” promotes the celibate life as the highest ideal. But Hurd (1965: 163-65) proposes that some Corinthians had tried to impose their will on others by discouraging sexual intercourse even within marriage. They considered strict sexual abstinence mandatory for Christian life. In their letter they did not ask Paul to guide them or to arbitrate between competing viewpoints

³² 1 Corinthians 7:9.

³³ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 438.

³⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 249.

but hailed their voices as higher choice as a higher plan. Wire (1990:80) concurs that Paul is not answering questions but questioning answers.³⁵

This is clear evidence why Paul must use wisdom in responding to the guest of the Corinthians. Not to marry under compulsion but willingly as they sought to please the creator amidst immoral community.

If he truly believes it good for a man not to touch a woman, why should marriage couples not also try to attain that lofty ideal? Perhaps they could overcome the dangers of Satan through the power of God. If, however, Paul does not espouse this principle as the ideal but instead quotes a line from their letter that he intends to revise, it would compare with the slogan/retort tactic that many see elsewhere in the later.³⁶

The writer thinks Paul was deliberate in his choice of words. Paul started with marital discussion on marriage and sexuality by citing a passage from Corinthians 7:1b, which he intends to qualify and correct.³⁷ We need to note that the situation at Corinth was a complex set of interrelated social, sexual, and spiritual problems that frequently pitted the supposedly enlightened or elite against the unenlightened or none elite.³⁸ Paul was confronted with this chaotic situation³⁹, he needed wisdom to

³⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 251-252.

³⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 249.

³⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians* 251.

³⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 236.

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:11; 7:1; 16:17.

approach and resolve this complex crisis condition. Like David E Garland⁴⁰ has written in his book, Paul quoted the Corinthians position “as if he agrees with it” and then to add “strong qualifications to its use”.⁴¹ Like today’s modern Youths, many have opted to remain single, but for selfish, indiscriminate sex. That should not be encouraged in any way except for the service of God. “Paul is not an opponent of sex but a proponent of dedication to Christ.”⁴² In his wisdom Paul advised that the unmarried and widows could stay that way unless they are burn with passion which is more likely to happen, they can marry.⁴³ Celibacy as far as Paul is concerned is a spiritual gift, and not all have it and in fact, in our days and in particular, African Continent, is very rarer. In my area, if a man or woman stays without marriage is either seen as a lazy and irresponsible man. If it is a woman, she is seen a harlot who waste her life around. With the alarming rate of sexual promiscuity around, every man and woman will rather be encouraged to marry unless God has truly called you who will equally give the sufficient grace to stand.

In Nigeria, most of the people who stay unmarried go around with women; in this case it increases immorality just as it was in the Corinthian City. Celibacy which is not from the gift of God and to serve God is a reckless opening for Satan to destroy the spirituality of the Church. The Celibate becomes vulnerable. This was obviously not an option for the married. Paul has always encouraged the younger widows to

⁴⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 250.

⁴¹ Yarbrough 1985:93, quoted in Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 250.

⁴² Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 253.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 7:8-9.

remarry aware of the dangers of staying alone. The only reason to be alone is if you are in a perpetual service of God.⁴⁴ Any conclusion here is a difficult one. Things that bare clear are facts that some Corinthians seems to impose their stand on others, second, once married you are obligated to satisfy your spouse sexually and otherwise, three, if you want not to marry it must be the cogent reason to serve God and not selfish reasons. Paul's intention is not to encourage celibacy but also not to discourage it if it was legitimate. He was aware of the intense sex drive which is a powerful force that can pose a great dander to spirituality if it is not harnessed.

Divorce: Those Married to Believers and Those Married to Unbelievers

God who created Man and Woman in the Garden of Eden, Did He ever intended that Adam and Eve could separate because of any reason? The response of Adam when given Eve was very clearly stated. They were to become one entity. Something that is one never separates but, if it does, is no longer one but pieces.

The teaching of Jesus in Mathew 5:31-32 about divorcing for marital unfaithfulness brought about the question of if a man can divorce his wife for any reason in Matthew 19:3. Looking at both passages, Jesus seems to answer the question by saying yes a man can divorce his wife for marital unfaithfulness. But what if it is the man that is unfaithful? Male dominance has always pause a trait to the oneness and equality of the husband and wife, that has created unpleasant family life. From Jesus response in Mathew 5:31-32, He, rather made it clear that

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35.

divorce is never intended at all. Marriage is for life. What will it be like, if you divorce your wife and remain like that until one of you is late? Almost an impossible practice that will rather prefer one enduring and forgiving his or her spouse whenever an offence is committed of any kind and neither should this encourage the offender to continue doing so. Those who belongs to God and fears Him resolves their issues and practice the Scriptures in their home, it is their life their constitution. Any other alternative only leads to disobedience to God's word and therefore destruction of God's institution. Jesus never supported divorce in any way but rather tried to prohibit it if God's intention in instituting marriage or family in the creation account of man and woman, Adam and Eve valid for us today.

Paul's idea of marriage is clear from the Corinthian passages. He made sure to state that the instruction he was given is directly from Jesus not his. To the wives he said "a wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife."⁴⁵ Paul is straight forward here, if a woman decides to divorce her husband, the question she must answer is, will she remain unmarried for life? What about the sexual experience that she might burn with? The obvious option if the sanctity of marriage is to be maintained is to stay is reconciled. The same applies to the man who is firmly told not to divorce the wife. Charles B. Williams supports the idea when he said, "In Paul's view there is an absolute sanctity in the marriage

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 7:10.

relation.”⁴⁶ Paul never bothered to talk about the consequences of divorce in Mathew 5:32 were a divorcee will remain unmarried for life until the partner is death, and if she does meet a man, she is committing adultery. This was subject to death by stoning according to the Old Testament and the Jewish law.

Divorce has been seen generally by the creation law never to take place; man was to guard against it. He was rather instructed to love his wife.⁴⁷ But in the book of Mark, we see an allowance being created but for a willful stubbornness of human beings.⁴⁸ But surely in the beginning it was not so. Once an issue is attached to stubbornness, then we know the end result is not good. Jesus simply states that man has tried to destroy the good foundations and intention of God as regard marriage. In this case divorce is disobedience to God’s standard. Nonetheless, as seen earlier, if stubbornness cannot be controlled, then one must control being alone without remarriage and without sex because it will amount to adultery.

As Paul concluded, may the writer say that the Bible is our guide concerning issues of marriage. In no way did God in his creation and Jesus in his teachings advocated for a divorce. He rebuked it, traced it to the stubbornness of man.⁴⁹ Michael J Gorman has said “...believers who are married to believers (7:10-11) not to initiate a divorce, basing his strong word on the teachings of Jesus....”⁵⁰ No matter

⁴⁶ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

⁴⁷ Malachi 2:16.

⁴⁸ Mark 10:5.

⁴⁹ See Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke:16-18.

⁵⁰ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 253.

how our land Laws makes divorce comfortable, it is against the one who instituted it in the first place. Happiness can never be attained to until we turn back to the Creator.

Paul in his wisdom solves the problem of those who are Christians but are married to unbelievers, should they separate? And what if one of them wants it and what should the other partner do? Paul first addressed the believers who are married to believers.⁵¹ Believers must not initiate a divorce. This teaching was not new, he simply recall the teachings of Jesus in the gospels.⁵² Divorce, as explained earlier is not a Christian way; it is not supported by the bible and must be avoided by every child of God.

What if a child of God is married to an unbelieving wife (presumably an unbelieving husband) who seeks for divorce what should one do? It is good to note that in the first place a believer is not allowed to marry an unbeliever. They will be unequally joined together in the first place. From the Corinthians background, it seems they were married before they became Christians. Dr Warren has supported the fact that some Corinthian Christians were unbeliever when they got married. Now they are Christians and their partners are not, what should they do? Should

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 7: 10-11.

⁵² Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16-18.

⁷⁹ See 2 Corinthians 6:14.

⁸⁰ Warren, *Exegetical Outlines*, 438.

⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 7:12.

⁸² 1 Corinthians 7:12.

they divorce their unbelieving partners? Should they even refuse sex? And if the unbelieving partner wants to leave should it be allowed? These are important questions that Paul had to respond to resolve the Corinthians issues on marriage.

Paul began by clearly telling them that the words or counsel he was giving were from him directly not Jesus. In another word Paul is saying that I feel the spirit lead me to say “if the unbelieving partner wants to stay, let her stay.”⁵³ Paul said no seeking of divorce from the part of the Believer at all. And there was good reason for that. Michael J Gorman puts it this way, “Paul advises not to seek divorce (7:12-13) because the effect of the unbalanced union is from un-holiness (ungodliness) toward holiness, and not vice versa thereby positively effecting children as well as the unbelieving spouse (7:14), who may actually become a believer(7:16).”⁵⁴ Paul have good reasons to ask the believing partner to choose to stay and never to initiate or create unpleasant activities to cause the unbelieving to wish to go. This is typical of some Nigerian behavior. Since the Bible says no divorce, they will deliberately make the marriage unbearable to the other partner so that it will be said he or she was the one that chooses to leave freely. The believer is to sincerely seek the unbelieving partner to stay so as to win the person and the children to Christ. It is a good forum for good influence. Williams said, “The Christian should, and often does, shed a saving influence on the unbelieving husband or wife, and also on the children.”⁵⁵ Warren rather said, stay where you are and use every opportunity to try to win the

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 7:13.

⁵⁴ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 253.

⁵⁵ Williams *Pauline Epistles*, 122.

lost mate.⁵⁶ Your house becomes a mission ground. It becomes your first missionary center which you must dedicate everything you can for the soul of your unbelieving mate and children.

In the case where the unbelieving partner, after you have done everything for her to stay and she or he insist to want to go, what else can you do? Paul says let her go in peace. God has called us to be at peace with one another. The demonstration of the spirit of Christ in the home by the Christian gives him that clear conscience that he has done his or her best to keep and preach Christ to the other by influence of good character, good conduct. In this case you are no longer under obligation to keep her. One is not bound to maintain the union and has the right to remarry.⁵⁷ Can she or He remarry? Really, Paul seems not to have made a clear statement on this. Verse 10-11 seems to advocate efforts of reconciliation, but also verse 15 talks about abandonment does break the marriage vows which were done while in unbelief. We need to keep in mind that Paul is not commanding that one can divorce his partner but permitting it in certain clear cases that involves not two believers but an unbeliever and a believer situation. The Corinthians were advised to remain in the position God called them, not to try to undo their situation but to allow God through Christ make changes Himself in due time and in His own way.

⁵⁶ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 439.

⁵⁷ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 253.

The Principle of “Remain as You Are”

Paul in First Corinthians 7: 17-24, addresses an important issue of a Christian social status. Paul believes that the providence of God has much to do with the social status of his Children’s social boundaries. The bottom line of Paul’s analysis of a child of God’s station is basically, ‘stay as you were when God called you’.⁵⁸ “This refers to the social station in which God calls one in to be saved by trusting Christ.”⁵⁹ Christianity has rendered the social distinction of Gentile and Jew, slave and free, male and female, married and single void. They no longer count in the new found faith in Christ. Any effort to force them on the Church, they give reason for chaos in the Church. Paul tells the Corinthians not to try to “undo” their situation, but to abide in their calling and allow Christ to make the changes in His way and His time.”⁶⁰ The social classifications were not relevant in the Church any more. What matters most was the obedience to God, not status or stations.⁶¹

Paul is simply saying, this are my orders, has a man been called after he was circumcised, he must not change that. Has a man been called without circumcision? He must not be circumcised. Being circumcise or not has no value, what is most important is obedience to God’s commands. Were you a slave when you were called? Let that not annoy you. Everyone must remain and appreciate the station God called us, His purchase of every Christian is enough and obedience to Him gives

⁵⁸ 1 Corinthian 7:17, 20, 24, 27.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 123.

⁶⁰ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 43.

⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 7:17; see Galatians 5:6; 6:15.

us peace. We must not forget that whichever thing we find ourselves doing; we should do it as unto the Lord who owns everything and everyone.

Paul categorically says; let everyone be satisfied with his social lot.⁶² He expects the same understanding with the slaves and the free. "The fact that a person becomes a Christian does not change his or her status in society."⁶³ In another word, Paul enjoins the same contentment as to slavery and freedom. As to what you were before you knew Christ personally as savior and when you have accepted Him as savior. Maturity in Christ will only show that you are responding to the contentment and humility of God in remaining where you have been called.

Having said all that has been written on celibacy and the Principle of Remain as you are, it is good to note that Paul's concern here was not necessarily the issue of slavery or freedom, circumcised or not circumcised, but Paul chooses these issues to "undergird the force of his practical instructions about marriage and celibacy with theological reasoning."⁶⁴ Theologians see this as a digression which does not wander away the theme but, like David E Garland puts it "amplifies or illustrates the main topic."⁶⁵ When you take a good look at it, what does un-circumcision and circumcision, slavery and freedom have to do with marriage, divorce and celibacy? They were used by Paul to illustrate divine principles that no human status can stand or compare with the Christian status in God through Christ. Since a Christian is now

⁶² 1 Corinthians 7:20.

⁶³ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 439.

⁶⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 298.

⁶⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

defined by god's call, no condition presents an obstacle to living a Christian life.

Thiselton puts it well: "A Christian does not have to seek 'the situation 'in order to enjoy Christian freedom or serve God's called effectively.'"⁶⁶ Therefore, Paul in all these insists on three issues in 7:17, 20, 24 that they maintain the position God has called them.

The use of words by Paul is important here, the verb "to remain" means to *menein* in verse 8 and 11; "live accordingly" in verse 17 Paul uses the word *houtos peripateito*; in verse 20, he uses the verb "in this remain" *en taute meneto*; while in verse 24 he said "in this remain before God" *en touto meneto para theo*. This was Paul's principle in guiding the people in matters of marriage and celibacy. Garland elaborates that "to alter the one's status in life on a religious ground gives more importance to the worldly status than it merits and denies God's calling in Christ based on grace alone. The offer of salvation came to them without requiring them to alter their ethnic, social, or domestic status."⁶⁷ The salvation came to us 'while we were yet sinners' not for any good we have done or will do. It is free of charge. All those requirements were not necessary and will only lead to boasting, making them think is because they can do some things that God accepts them.

Marriage principles as laid down by God, explained by Jesus in the gospels, and echoed by the Apostles, were not to be altered because somebody wanted to become more spiritual. Salvation never changed the social status. They could freely

⁶⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

⁶⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

and dedicatedly serve God were they were when they received Christ. Their new found faith was not to create trouble, destabilization of one's situation but was to bring peace of God in the hearts of men. Paul urges therefore remain where you are and serve God faithfully.

Advice of Marriage for the Betrothed and for Widows

Paul wraps up this chapter and discussion on marriages given advice on three issues or groups of unmarried people. First he considered the Virgins or unmarried girls, second the unmarried betrothed men and the widows.⁶⁸ Paul started by advising the unmarried 'virgins' or singles that they should remain single though marrying will not be a sin.⁶⁹ As discussed earlier, marriage is a distraction to those who want to dedicate their lives to the service of God, part from which the writer has no support. "Marriage is a distraction from total devotion to lord, for a married person- whether male or female-is (appropriately) distracted in a way that is not true of single folks(7:32-35)."⁷⁰ It is very clear from Paul's teachings in this chapter that once you are married, your first responsibility, which is an act of worship, is to your wife and family. Martin Luther has said, "No one can have real happiness in marriage who does not recognize in firm faith that this estate together with all its works however insignificant, is pleasing to God and precious in his

⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:25-40.

⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:25-6, 28.

⁷⁰ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*.

sight.”⁷¹ No doubt about that. Paul is still echoing the same stand here. In marriage no distress of “I was busy doing God’s work” is acceptable; therefore if you want to be free to serve God without hindrances, you can choose to remain alone.

One of the key word use by Paul here is “virgins”⁷² Worth noting is the fact that this refers not only to the female but to the males, the unmarried men and girls. The entire context includes both sexes. So if a man or a girl marries, sin has not been committed as some might have thought. He also was speaking with that urgency in mind. The writer thinks Paul was eschatological in his presentation of the matter in verses. This perspective one believes affected also his advices and recommendations. I mean, if Jesus was coming soon, why bother with this earthly issues of marry not to marry, happiness or no happiness, social status or no social status, etc. I see Paul saying, men and women let’s forget about its earthly pursuit and focus on the Kingdom of God that is at hand. With or without the aforementioned issues, let’s have and focus on Christ the savior than wasting our time. Charles B Williams puts it this way, “in the light of the impending doom of the present world order he warns people to avoid extremes. Those with social and economic advantages, good wives and happy homes, should live a temperately as those who do not have these social privileges....the outward show of this world is passing away”⁷³ Paul in this presentation from verses 25- 40, he gave the warning

⁷¹ Lull, *Martin Luther’s*, 161.

⁷² 1 Corinthians 25.

⁷³ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 124.

three times about the end and doom of the world. They were to take heed not to be so concern about this earth that was soon coming to an end.

One Wife to One Husband

The next focus of this paper takes us back to the creation. We have to understand God's mind when he made Adam and Eve and come back to look at Paul correction of the Christians in the Church of Corinth. It may be necessary to emphasize again and again some issues the Corinthians faced because we are facing them too. Even with the scriptures with us, it seems either we do not know what to do or we are being deliberate. In most of the

African tribes, especially in Nigeria where the writers comes from, it is not news that a man can choose to marry as many wives as he can. Polygamy therefore is very acceptable and in some cases, we have seen some Churches allowing it. In my opening chapter I made it clear that when a woman cannot give birth to a male child, the family of the man may have to get him another wife. This is a common practice. The implication is simple; those who cannot endure following the bible find it easier to be synergistic in their worship of God.

Even the African traditional religious seems to have behind them that God created man and woman to be one. Where did they get this? May be it is from their conscience, or the natural law. Since we were all created in the "imago-dei" one will believe that the image of God in them helps them to know even before the gospel came that God exists and he made marriage of one man one wife. But for reasons of status in the community, getting more male children to work on farm, pride that one is capable etc most have made the African man to believe in one man many wives. It

is in this environment that this study and research is very relevant. Why? Because even among the elite who go to Church, when little problems of no children, no male child, and family normal crisis, the Christian man finds it easier to go back to marry another wife because his father had more than one. To him is a normal life.

What was in Gods mind when he created us male and female?⁷⁴ Colin E. Gunton has written quoting Ireaneus “that God is the creator of the world is accepted every even by those very persons who in many ways speak against him, and yet acknowledge Him, styling Him the Creator... all men, in fact, consenting to this truth....”⁷⁵ Without Paul talking, without us addressing issues like this one, the generality of the human race will tell you what is right, what they believe God created and wanted. The “believe in creation is universal in human race,”⁷⁶ This gives me the footing to address the fact that, generally, especially in the African context, they believe that man and woman was created husband and wife, were it not the stubbornness of man for his human selfish desires and interest. If not for the Satanic master minding the minds of men, who could have ever believed that in history a day will come when the word will clamor for man and man marriage , woman to woman marriage? Is it that people do not realize it is not from God or they deliberately trust in Human wisdom to accept all pleasures of life? I want to believe that, conscience tells even those practicing it that something is wrong somewhere.

⁷⁴ Genesis 1:27-28.

⁷⁵ Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

⁷⁶ Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 2.

But since “Sodom did not learn, even though they knew it was bad, they perished.

We are indeed heading to destruction.

Jesus Himself reaffirm in His teachings the ideal laid down in the book of Genesis. “In the beginning God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh, so that they are no longer two but one flesh”⁷⁷ Having quoted what happened in Genesis, Jesus added His own teaching on the matter confirming or sealing the contraction of marriage in Genesis by God Himself. He said paraphrased, “no one is to break apart what God has linked together.”⁷⁸ Some Bibles say, join together, united together etc. The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters confirms that, “Jesus thus taught that marriage was a divine institution, owning the blessing of God. It was to be monogamous, lifelong and an unparalleled spiritual oneness of two people- a man and woman-so united by God that they are no longer two but one”⁷⁹ The bottom line is when a man and woman have consented to each other, the contract of marriage is sealed by God and even the couple has no right to separate, in another word to undo their decision to be together as Husband and wife. No wonder Paul said you may choose not to marry otherwise you definitely loose the authority of being alone, doing whatever you want.

Marva J. Dawn, in her effort to help improve family sexual union or Character, as she put it, focuses on what she called “Beyond Technique to

⁷⁷ Mark 10:6-7; cf. Genesis 1:27; 2:24.

⁷⁸ Mark 10:9.

⁷⁹ Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 595.

Intimacy.”⁸⁰ In her chapter five titled “Marriage Is for more than two,”⁸¹ she wrote that “the biblical picture of marriage is certainly an alternative to the myths held by our society... the scriptures hold marriage in the highest esteem especially as a symbol of our relationship with God.”⁸² What a statement and a confirmation that we have only one God to relate to just as we only have ourselves, male and female to relate to. Yes, people can choose to play gimmicks with God by relating to the standard of the society and yet claiming God, but does it work? Such people only live in deceit of themselves and eventually suffers the consequences of disobedience. One purpose of Genesis two is that male and woman become one and multiply. Not only that, they were to be help mates, “a helper corresponds”⁸³ to the man for companionship and intimacy. Naturally, you can’t get so intimate with two people, only one does work as God intended it to be.

Each man should have his own Wife and each wife her own husband, is a remarkable statement.⁸⁴ Many commentators or writers do not write anything about either the family could marry one or more wives. Like I said earlier, people seem to have known that marriage is between two people who come together as one. Paul himself did not see it a problem. But his selected words carry the message.

⁸⁰ Marva J. Dawn, *Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), cover page.

⁸¹ Dawn, *Sexual Character*, 41.

⁸² Dawn, *Sexual Character*, 42.

⁸³ Dawn, *Sexual Character*, 43.

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:2.

Like Williams puts it "... each man a wife and each woman a husband"⁸⁵ indicating that each was entitle for one and no more. Any contrary opinion will clearly attract public disgrace, because it is something believed to be known clearly to the human race.

May the writer observe that, if each man is to have his own wife and wife her own Husband, why? From the preceding verse to with stand the sin of adultery and fornication. Behind this statement is the fact that if the man has two wives for example, how can he satisfy them? By implication therefore remedy for sin of adultery has not been achieve by everyone having his spouse.

Fulfill Each Other's Needs Bodily

As discussed in the introduction, the Corinthian Christians were faced with rampant sexual immorality cause by the Goddess temple worship around, Williams calls it "... special goddess of sex...."⁸⁶. The community itself was polluted; sexual activities were like a normal religious life. Those who became believers from this background had these problems to contend with. On the other hand, some of the believers believe that abstaining from sex was a spiritual service. Well, this can be understood from this environment of immorality. But it was extreme to think that dedication none self to God was withdrawal from sex even in case of legitimate marriage life. We can now appreciate the issues of whether one should even marry

⁸⁵ Williams *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

⁸⁶ Williams *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

or to remain single. We African can easily not understand this guest because everyone believes that “marriage is a sign of maturity. You are not a man until you are married, age does not matter, it is the ability to take care of a family, your wife who is the responsibility of the man. No woman is responsible for herself,”⁸⁷ not in Africa.

To fulfill this sexual responsibility, Paul had to make clear statement. After marriage, no body owns his or her body.⁸⁸ You relinquish your authority the very day you said, “I do”. Once the marriage contract has been signed, it is your spouse that has authority over you. This was meant to allow sex than letting the partner who needs it burn in desire which could easily let him or her to find sex fulfillment outside marriage since it was not a great deal after all in that society. Paul said no partner should willfully deprive the other sex. To show how serious this was, Paul ordered that even in spiritual matters, especially prayers, it must be with the permission of your spouse and not the decision of one person but the two shall agree. Not only that even if they do agree, he ordered it must be for a short time⁸⁹ so that the enemy will not have any door way to tempt any of them to commit sexual immorality. “Paul recognizes the sexual weakness of men and women.”⁹⁰ This is how

⁸⁷ An African child from birth is groomed for this responsibility. Women are only good and have their value only in the man. That is why African will prefer male children than women. A boy is the man of the house especially first born.

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:3-4.

⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:5.

⁹⁰ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

serious the condition of the Corinthians was. With the polluted loose society, Satan could easily tempt them for lack of self-control.

The passages are driving us to the fact that “the husband must give his wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband’s. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife’s.”⁹¹ Quoting Fee, 280, *The Dictionary of Paul* said “for Paul the marriage bed is both unitive (cf. 6:16) and an illustration that the two belong to one another in total mutuality”⁹² Paul articulate this idea in Ephesians where he enjoins the husband and wife subject themselves to one another out of reverence for and obligation to Christ.⁹³ To maintain sanity and purity of marriage, conjugal sexual relationship is necessary and must be responded without coercion of both parties but out of joy of fulfilling marital vows taken. Marva writing to encourage Christian in her book ‘biblical sexuality’ has said, “... God’s design for human sexuality is a good one and that we reject it to our own peril. Sexual intercourse is such a profound sharing of ourselves with our partners that it needs to be protected – within the covenant of lifelong, faithful commitment. When God’s design is followed, how freeing it is for all the persons involved!”⁹⁴ It is a mystery of union that brings husband and wife together to feel and appreciate each other bringing relief to themselves in many ways. Paul knew exactly what he was doing

⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 7 :3-4.

⁹² Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 596.

⁹³ Ephesians 5:21.

⁹⁴ Dawn, *Sexual Character*, 24.

when he told the Corinthians to marry if they cannot stand without sex; the question of whether a married man should or should not have sex is not an issue.

Do Not Deprive Each Other

Deprivitization is an act whereby one deliberately put on resisting attitude to frustrate the other partner from getting what may be right owned by the other spouse. To deprive simply connotes the idea of cheating or refusing the person's right to sex. Paul has already made it clear that after marriage none of the couples have authority over their own bodies. Any act to refuse the legitimacy of the partner, is Deprivitization. Williams has said "husband and wives belong to each other and should respect each other's body."⁹⁵ This is a clear statement of sexual freedom of husband and wife. In another word, one could say that it is mandatory, a duty for the married to submit completely to one another in sexual demands.

It will be good here to reflect over the behavior of the Corinthians concerning sex that it became a problem where Paul had to address by instructing that none of the partner should deprave the other. To me and many that come from Nigeria where marriage is clear seen as for sex and children, depravity seems strange. Like Gorman has proposed in his book, there is that strong possibility that "it ... appears that some of the believers in Corinth concluded not that sex was permissible for anyone with anyone..., but that it was not permissible at all for brothers and sisters in Christ, even

⁹⁵ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 120.

in marriage.”⁹⁶ This gives an answer why questions could come on sexual activities of legitimately married couples. Paul clearly points out and rejected the fact that sexual abstinence is appropriate for married believers. If they cannot submit to each other in sex, if they feel that it was a spiritual discipline to abstain from it, then, who has the right for it? Is it those outside marriage? We must learn and practice not depriving each other except with mutual agreement for prayer and May I suggest, for any other serious reason that has to do with illness, unavoidable trips for the family good, e c t. Not done at will but by permission of the owner, your spouse.

Giving Self to Prayer

Sex, by Paul’s presentations, is a mutual understanding of both partners. Abstinence from sex, based on what was happening in the society of Corinth, was a dangerous game. It was a door way that Satan,⁹⁷ the enemy of the Church could easily use to destroy the faith of many. Paul realistically sees abstinence from sex within family couples was an invitation to temptation. Knowing fully that after marriage you deliberately lose your authority over your own body, Paul saw only one thing that could make the family to adjust the principle of no depravity of one another of sex. The issue of time to pray and fast, to dedicate time to seek God’s face, His guidance and leadership over our lives.

⁹⁶ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 252.

⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:2, 5-6.

We must not forget that prayer itself was not powerful reason enough to destroy the authority God has place over the family system. The fact that you do not own yourself any more. The remedy only available is mutual agreement. Your partner must consent to your proposal and refusal of your proposal does not make your partner unchristian. It must be remembered that Paul's teachings does not only "... expects husbands to (as well as wives) to fulfill the appropriate conjugal needs of their spouses, but – in contrast to much of the pagan world – he also expects them not to engage in sex with other people."⁹⁸ Prayer must not stop this, otherwise what the person desires to achieve may be destroyed by the temptation to have affairs with another outside marriage.

Then the spiritual purpose will have been lost. It will seem better not to have even decided to pray in the first place because worst condition has been achieved. Paul was not kidding when he made it clear that if you can't stand the sexual desires, you should better marry. You can be married and you behave as though you are not. Paul is equally clear thus if you want to serve God, put Him first then do not marry. Why? Because you owe your body for your spouse, when she or he needs you, you must be there period. You surely is at the mercy and understanding of your wife or husband.

⁹⁸ Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 252.

Coming Together Again for Sexual Fulfillment

Paul fully knowing the schemes of men and women, who want to be extremists, may over look the agreement of their spouse and extend the time unnecessarily. That would have amounted to the fact of disobeying family mutuality. Here Paul decided to be proactive by making it categorically clear that such a mutual consent to absence from sex must be for a short time. This was no joke. Special devotion is good but not at the detriment of the other partner or your family. Williams agrees with the fact that it was 'but this period must not be so long that Satan can tempt them through lack of self-control.'⁹⁹ They were not to be, what I call 'over spiritual' to affect the family. The purity and sanctity of the home is very important till date.

This is one of the failures of the African proliferation of Churches and ministries today. Many who called themselves Pastors have either abandon their families or divorced them in the name that 'God has called them' but the wife is the hindrance. A man will wake up the following day to claim that God spoke to him that his wife is a hindrance to the gospel so she has to leave. Or God has revealed to them that another woman was fit for him for the ministry. Such has become devastating to the church in Nigeria. Paul in no way ever suggested this. The word of God has never been ambiguous, it has been clear to those who allow the spirit to lead them to righteousness. In a book *Christian Social Teaching* edited by George W Forell, has it that "human sexuality is the gift of a loving God. It is to be honored and

⁹⁹ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

cherished by all people. As a means for the expression or the deepest human love and intimacy, sexuality has great power.”¹⁰⁰ In Nigeria, many have been remarried in many Churches. If the evangelicals refuse to accept such weddings, they go to other pastors who are willing. In fact such people have turn out to be elders of those Churches. What a caricature of the gospel.

What a complex situation where many have been deceived. What a market place gospel that has polarize the church. People now go to the church based on the one that will teach “what I want” and our African Christians are vulnerable because of the cultural background we are coming from. We must find away to revive the biblical principles concerning marriage and home. Once the scriptures are adhered to, sanity will come back to our homes and churches. Spirituality can never be an obstacle to a happy home. The man or desiring to pray or devote himself to God, it must be mutually agreed and must deliberately be for short time.

Marriage Is a Gift

The few weeks the writer has been in school from Nigeria to America, how do I feel without my wife? There is no day I wish I am not home. No day I don’t feel alone, no matter how I have tried to bend down to study it does not take long to discover that part of me is already home thinking of what? How I miss my wife. A story was related to me by a friend Rev Sylvester, we just meet in school for 1 day, we became so close together. We had to stay together because he was equally here

¹⁰⁰ George W. Forell, ed., *Christian Social Teaching: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 386.

in school for few weeks without his family, so we were condoling each other daily. He told me of one of our Nigerian fathers who came to study abroad many years ago, because he was here without his family, every day he will go inside his room and cry that he wanted to go back home to his wife. He was always disturbing his colleagues to go back home. Though he was elderly, he could still feel the absence of his family. To me, I believe marriage is a mystery that only God the creator can fathom the bond of husband and wife.

The Bible is clear that he who finds a wife finds a good thing.¹⁰¹ A woman is a gift to the man. In the first place, it was because God saw that the man was lonely. That there was no good companion for him; He decided to make Eve out of Adam for Adam. Loneliness was replaced with companionship that is found in helping each other,¹⁰² in complementing each other. They became help mates. Since God has created us sex beings, without the woman, man alone cannot withstand the desire that burn in him to have sex.

True husbands who have tested the blessings of togetherness will want to appreciate their wives and try to please them. The same may be true of the wives. It is a special design of God that brings everyone together, the man, woman and children to appreciate life together. In the first place, if the woman was not there, were will the world be? What a perfect design of the creator.

¹⁰¹ Proverbs 18:22.

¹⁰² Proverbs 31:10-31.

Ephesians Chapter 5:21-33

Ephesians 5:18-6:9, addresses household issues, particularly the roles of the husband, the wife and the Children. Here Paul clearly calls for mutual submission of husband and wife. But taking a close look at it, one will believe the issue of submission was more on the women than men. Could it be because the bible says so or Paul was trying to be conscious of the cultural teachings that were going on in Greco- Roman World. Craig S Keener has suggested that it were possible Paul was trying to play safe and probably gain some support from the lawmakers of the time and to be careful else they would see the Church to be going against the societal believes and might cause the church rejection.¹⁰³ He particularly wrote, "There is thus a reason to think that Paul, awaiting trials in Rome, would have been contemplating strategies to appeal to the powerbrokers in Rome whose decisions could set precedents for policies toward Christians elsewhere in the empire. His household codes may represent a long –range response to basic Roman cultural objections to the gospel."¹⁰⁴ Keener sees this as a strategy used by Paul to wave off the resistance in the Roman world especially on the family codes that may be a threat to the ruling class who had to protect their traditions that had suffered other attacks by other cults. There was that fear that women may have the basis to affirm too much independence at the expense of their marriage.

¹⁰³ Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 139-148.

¹⁰⁴ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 147.

Based on research, actually the Greco-Roman world were protective of their traditions from the foreign cults. Conservative writers like Plutarch, and especially the socially insecure satirist Juvenal, reacted against foreign cults which they believed, were greatly strengthened through the gullibility of women.¹⁰⁵ The women that were being saved by accepting Jesus as savior and thereby becoming Christians paused a threat to the upper class men and through them could provoke increased hostility toward the Christians.¹⁰⁶ Agreed this are possibilities, to what extent would Paul had gone in playing into the hands of the community threat than his fear and honor of God he was ready and willing to die for? May the writer say that, it is still preferable not to assume anything here because there may be many questions we might not be able to answer? But is good to see the condition and situation the writer was facing when he wrote Ephesians. In this case we will say Paul dealt with the issue of submission of women because it was an important part of the church order of family responsibility. Should Paul have left the issue of submission undefined and ambiguous because of the Roman high class who were jealously protecting their traditions? An examination of the book of Ephesians 5:21-33 will prove how squarely Paul dealt with the issue of submission.

It is interesting to¹⁰⁷ also note that some modern women see Paul as being too hard on women. They see verses 21- 24 especially as antique. Paul is foggy

¹⁰⁵ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 142.

¹⁰⁶ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Romans 16.

because he hated women and sought to lower their dignity.¹⁰⁸ If we approach the passages of Ephesians with that notion, we will not value the institution of marriage and the joy that comes from every one doing what he or she ought to do for harmonious living. At least, it is noticeable that in the book of Romans Paul commended seven women whom he knew as great servants of Christ. Our minds must be disabused of any doubt of these passages addressing our situation today. Most of our cultures, especially in Africa, will applaud this teachings but care to has to be taken to truly understand what Paul is talking and addressing.

The Imitation of Christ

Ephesians Chapter five starts with an important topic that affects every one that calls him or herself a Christian. We are enjoined as believers to be imitators of God.¹⁰⁹ As Gods children not minding what you think of yourself, position, status, man or woman, children or adults, etc., be imitators of God. The love of God, love of Jesus should inspire us. His sacrificing His son, the obedience of the son in submission to His father even unto the cross should be our great lesson. This should humble enough not to be arrogant in our homes.

As imitators, we must walk in love, walk in the light, be partakers with Christ in this areas; divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4; God's promises, Ephesians 3:6; Christ sufferings, 1 Peter 4:13; Holiness, Hebrew 12:10; the heavenly calling, Hebrew 3:1

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 391.

¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 5:1-2.

and God's glory, 1 Peter 5:1.¹¹⁰ We must walk carefully so as not to stumble as Christians. We must not only walk carefully but must also in harmony with one another and with God. This harmonious walk takes us to Ephesians 5:18-6:9. How can this be? The fullness of the Holy Spirit is vital to moving and walking with other people. The unity of the Church and the harmony of the home depend very much on the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹ Warren puts it this way, "it is power from within, not pressure from without that holds the church and the home together."¹¹² It is the power of the Holy Spirit within us that gives the power of obedience unto God and one another.

What helps to bring harmony to the home is the fact that "whatever a child of God does, it should be done as unto the Lord." The motive behind this idea is very powerful Husbands, wives, and children; whatever you do o it as unto the Lord. It is not the man you are doing to, neither the wife nor father. As far as Christ and God becomes the object of our worship, our actions, our activities, human failure will be overlooked. Family becomes service to God not man. The motivating agent is God not a fellow human being can fail us, get us angry, cheats us, and may not be forgiving and merciful. As a matter of fact, "family members who are right with the Lord will be right with each other."¹¹³ It is also true that, families that are not right with God will not be right to each other. Everyone will be acting selfishly and the will bring that family into chaos which will never be for the health of that family.

¹¹⁰ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 551.

¹¹¹ Ephesians 4:3; 5:18.

¹¹² Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 551.

¹¹³ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 552.

The comparison of the family live with the relationship of Jesus with the Church gives family relationship to each other a wonderful flavor. If that is how Christ relates to the church as the husband should relate gives the family a divine design, a divine touch. The idea of imitating Christ becomes powerful and perfect. If man should always compares his activities with that of Christ, families and the world will be a better place to live.

Submission and Love

Paul started by given the Ephesians the general principle that underlay's all the instructions He was going to give to both the man and woman and children. The opening passage is; "submit to one another,"¹¹⁴ We may ask, what is submission? The word goes with words like, "submit," "subject," and "submission." In the Greek word it is *hypotasso* or *hypotage*. These are of subjection, implying that one subjects or subordinates himself or herself to someone or something else. They imply a responsive obedience to whoever or whatever one is subject to.¹¹⁵ Paul give a general principle that should governs every child of God. If there should be respect and honor that we must give to each other is valuing each other this is indeed a reminder that we are all equal before God in Christ, regardless of race, social status, or gender.¹¹⁶ The submission here is compared to the submission we do when

¹¹⁴ Ephesians 5:21.

¹¹⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 584.

¹¹⁶ Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:4-6; cf. Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

we come before God to worship. It is a vital part of our being gathered before God. It flows from being filled with the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ Keener has argued that the mark of the Holy Spirit in us is the fact that we submit to one another. It is done out of the regard to Christ. Indeed whatever we will be asked of God to do in our families, we will do in reverence to God. “those who are filled with the spirit will also be” submitting to one another out of regard to Christ” (v.21), and this mutual submission will be expressed in specific family relationships in the household(5:22-6:9).”¹¹⁸ Submitting oneself to another in fear of God was a mark of genuine relationship one has with God even in our days.

We are not, under pretence of going about the duties of God’s immediate worship, to neglect those other duties of our particular callings, and which we owe to man in our several stations....¹¹⁹ We owe man a duty, to respect and submit to him as unto the lord. We can’t say we are God’s worshipers and we are found doing the contrary. Our worship of God must flow with our every day duties to each other. This brings us to the fact that women submitting to men will not be a burden; it should come from our normal flow of valuing man whom we owe the duty to submit to as unto the lord.

The great and main duty of the woman is to submit to her husband. Some females argue today that Paul was unfair to them. Many times Paul had to refer to the creation that made it clear the position of women in area of submission. It is a

¹¹⁷ Ephesians 5:18-20.

¹¹⁸ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 159.

¹¹⁹ James Fergusson and David Dickson, *The Epistles of Paul* (London, UK: Banner of Truth, 1978), 240.

ministry which women who value God and His word will appreciate that God gave them a profound ministry at home. It goes along with the saying that “if they are not faithful at home how can they outside?.” The first duty of man is the home. The adage says “charity begins at home”¹²⁰ submission in its normal understanding is a sign of humility which only come from people who have had a touch of God in their lives. In the Jewish Culture Keener reports that “a pre-Jerusalem teacher and those who commented on him are reported to have said: And do not multiply gossip with a woman; they said this concerning one’s own wife-how much the more concerning the wife of one’s companion.”¹²¹ So the later Jewish people normally considered women’s testimony less reliable than that of men. They were thought of as unstable and overly talkative. With wide spread of views, that different view about women could exist side by side is illustrated by the dispute of several much later rabbis, whose conflicting opinions their followers felt compelled to harmonize.¹²² This leads us to the fact that right from history women been seen as only good to be followers, not leaders by virtue of their disposition. They were viewed to have innate disposition that was part of the female gender. They were thought of being only subordinate beings and overlooking those other women who were able to break the gin or were exceptions. Our Christian women must show the world that they know Christ and He makes the deference.

¹²⁰ Popular saying in Nigeria.

¹²¹ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 162.

¹²² Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 162-164.

Women need to get this facts clear to help them relax and respect Paul and scripture. Submission is not merely a concept for women only. As I have tried to explain, it is an issue that is demanded of every Child of God. That home is a continuation of the general instruction on what is expected of a Child of God.¹²³ Submission does not indicate that the wife becomes a slave.¹²⁴ Wayne A mark has said “actually, the wife is nevermore free than when she is in submission to her husband, for then she is free to become all that God intended her to become.”¹²⁵ That inner mind that satisfies the fact that, you are faithful to Him who owns you, gives peace and joy that comes only from God through Jesus our Lord. The idea of submission here does not mean that the woman ca not open her mouth at home and bring her opinions, that she never gives advice, that you allow your abilities to lie dormant.¹²⁶ One other thing which I believe has made women to accuse Paul is thinking that submission means the wife is inferior to the husband. When Jesus continued in subjection to Mary his mother, Jesus was not inferior, was he?¹²⁷ We can see Jesus’ humility and submissiveness to His father. He will openly say, I can do nothing without Him who send me” was Jesus less than God?¹²⁸

¹²³ Compare this passages Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 5:5; Romans 13:1; Hebrew 13:17.

¹²⁴ Proverbs 31:10-31.

¹²⁵ Wayne A. Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1977), 17.

¹²⁶ Proverbs 31:26; Acts 18; Judges 13:21-23.

¹²⁷ Luke 2:51.

¹²⁸ John 5:30; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

The bible is clear that the woman must make herself submissive. It is a free will of reverence to God, no coercion. Unlike the roman period were women subjected to submit by the Roman authority. Keener said “the submission of wives was standard in ancient culture. Roman Law gave men binding authority over their wives and unmarried daughters.¹²⁹” In Paul’s presentations, that of the Church is quite different, it is out of respect to God. “The subordination, the submission, which the wife is to yield to the husband, is not servile, enslaving, but only respectful recognition of the husband as head of the home.”¹³⁰ It is a spiritual virtue; God has give man priority as head of the home because of his position inn creation.¹³¹ Our women must prove to be different from those times and from those who many have similar opinion of them. The submission itself has no time limit, it is continuous. You don’t get tired with it. It is actually mandatory; therefore refusal to submit is refusal to obey God who commanded it. The Greek verb is in imperative mood¹³² in fact, a woman’s submission is not based on how the husband treats her. It is not optional. James Fergusson has traced the difficulty that is naturally there in submission, he said;

as subjection in wives unto their husbands, is a must necessary duty; so considering the inbred pride, arrogance, and self-willedness, which is in all the sons and daughters of Adam by nature, it is a work of no small difficulty to get wives

¹²⁹ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 165.

¹³⁰ Williams *Pauline Epsitles*, 392.

¹³¹ See 1 Timothy 2:13-15.

¹³² Compare Ephesians 5:21-22 and 1 Peter 3:1.

persuaded to give that hearty, cheerful, loving, and dutiful respect and obedience unto their husbands, which both the law of nature , and the written word of God, do require from them: for to what purpose else doth he reiterate this exhortation, and enforce it by so strong and convincing arguments? “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives are unto their own husbands.”¹³³

The consolation is, it should be done as unto the Lord not man. Both her attitudes and actions are to be submissive. Paul gave example with how the Church submits to Christ which is to be total, complete. It is to be comprehensive; it is not to be on and off, it is consistent not minding the negative behavior of your husband because it is God you serve and is submitting to.

Love for Wife as Man’s Own Body

Paul in his own wisdom guided by God who instituted marriage made the responsibility of the man even harder. The man is to “love his wife as Christ love the Church and gave Himself up for her.” What a task! How many will be willing to die for the sake of their spouse? There may be, but very rear. That is what God is asking us to be willing to do to our wives. Whenever I ask the couples forum¹³⁴ that; the command Respect or submit and Love, which one is more difficult or hardest? The reaction is spontaneous and always majority believe to love is the hardest. The conclusion is usually, we can only try but not able to love as Christ love us. But why?

¹³³ Fergusson and Dickson, *Epistles of Paul*, 243.

¹³⁴ A Church family program were we bring husband and wife around to discuss family issues only in ECWA.

The obvious response that we can hear is who is able to die for his wife? The group normally will laugh about it and wave it off. Is Paul joking about this issue? I don't think so. Marriage is as deep as self-sacrificing which men must be ready to do.

The writer is a testimony to one of our lecturer.¹³⁵ One day as they were coming back from Jos with his wife, because another lost control and was heading to them, he deliberately turned the car so that the one that has lost control will hit him than the wife that was actually facing the upcoming car. That is how he died living the wife alive. That is the love we are to express to our wives. "The husband's love is the deathless, and sacrificial of itself."¹³⁶ It is so mandated that the husband must love his wife just as he loves his own body. Actually this agrees with the Genesis account. When the woman was presented to the man this is what he said; "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken from out of man."¹³⁷ Adams recognized her as same body with him. If this the case, can one mistreat in any way his flesh, his own body? The writer does ask simply can one slaps himself even when he has done something bad. The answer is obvious no! The man must be ready to love his wife and be ready to die for her just as Christ does the Church.

This is indeed a difficult task, but it is a possibility. The secret of harmony in the home, the unity of the Church both depend on the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ There is

¹³⁵ Late Rev Chuwar was a lecturer at ECWA Theological Institute Karu.

¹³⁶ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 392.

¹³⁷ Genesis 2:23.

¹³⁸ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 551.

absolutely nothing on this earth practically that we cannot do when commanded by God, if we really on Him He gives the power, whatever it takes to accomplish the task. We should not forget that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not evident by emotional experiences, miracles, and tongues, but rather Christian character.¹³⁹ We need to be reminded too that to be filled with the Holy Spirit means in another word to be filled and controlled by the word of God. You can't claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit in ultra-disobedience to the scriptures. It is the word of God that cleanses the Church; it is the word, food that nourishes the Church, food for the new nature of the believer.

Man generally has the tendency of failing not because they can't stand it, but mostly because of stubbornness of man who believes he is the head. Fergusson made it clear that God made it clear that it is the man to love the wife, not as if a woman cannot love but "because he is most ready to fail in this duty of love, and to abuse that superiority which God hath given him over his wife, by proving rigorous and bitter against her."¹⁴⁰ Submission to man and submission to love must be done out of the fear of God.

There are important facts we need to reflect on about the man's responsibility to love sacrificially. The man is called to be the wife's leader. By leader it means to head the house which does not show in any way that the wife is less than the man. That isn't enough, the man as a leader; he is to be a loving leader. The

¹³⁹ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 552.

¹⁴⁰ Fergusson and Dickson, *Epistles of Paul*, 244.

woman has such a need of love which God commanded three times in Ephesians 5. Verse 28 and 33, emphasizes, man to love his wife and 25 added that man should love as Christ love the Church. With this references, there are oceans of truth that we can bring out about mans relationship to his wife. There is a lot God wants the man to do to his wife. Wayne A. Mark mention few items a man should carry out, “he is to nourish, cherish, protect her, satisfy her, provide for her, sacrifice for her the degree and extend, and in the same manner as he does himself.”¹⁴¹ This is a lot, but is not all; the husband is to equate his love with the love of Christ to the Church. This love is so deep that we might not understand the in-depth of Christ’s love for the Church. But this is what we do know; it is an unconditional love or free love (Romans 5:8); it is a volitional love, He chooses to love us (Deut.7:7; Eph. 1:6-7); it is an intense love (John 13:1; Eph. 5:2, 25); it is an unselfish love (phil.2:6-7; it is purposeful love (Eph. 5:26-27); it is sacrificial love (Eph. 5:2, 25; Gal.2:20; 1 Pet.3:18; Rom.5:6-11; 1 Pet.2:24); it is a manifested love, he tells us He loves us, shows us He does, He protects us, helps us, defends us, teaches us, comforts us ,chastens us, equips us ,empathize with us, and provides all our needs (John 10:1-14; 14:1-3; 13:34,35; 15:9-10; Rom. 8:32; Phil.4:13, 19;Heb.4:14-16).¹⁴² Man, this is what you are in for when you get married. We are responsible for our wives.

¹⁴¹ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 39.

¹⁴² Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 40.

A Man Leaves His Mother and Father

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ¹⁴³ This is taking us to the foundation of Marriage. Having told the family all that makes a Christian Home, he takes them back to creation probably to see and notice the intention of God when He instituted the family. Indeed God was very clear in His plan for the Man, the family. Once a mistake or deliberate denial of the implementation of Genesis 2:24 has been abused, the family can never be what God wanted it to be. God, in the whole of scriptures, included only four passages concerning the marriage principles of leaving and uniting as husband and wife. These are Genesis 2:24; Mathew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8, and Ephesians 5:31. In this passages, there are three major words that tells us everything about God’s mind concerning marriage, they are; the Leaving, the Cleaving, and the becoming One flesh.

Today, there are many unhappy families. This is made possible because man has refused to heed to the teaching of the scriptures that clearly tells us how marriage is to be conducted. The question therefore is what does God’s kind of marriage involves? The answer is not farfetched. First the Bible tells the man to “leave his father and mother.” This means that the man must establish an adult relationship with his parents. It means you are independent of your parents to be able to establish your own home. That your relationship with your parents radically change, you now make your wife relationship the priority. Secondly, there has been

¹⁴³ Ephesians 5:31.

“the Cleaving.” This has to do with uniting. The idea of if it does not work out, I quit is not part of this. The cleaving has to be complete. It is a permanent relationship. Wayne A. Mark has said, “Marriage means that a husband and wife enter into a relationship for which they accept full responsibility and in which they commit themselves to each other regardless of what problem arise.”¹⁴⁴ This is a serious commitment of two people, male and female for life. It is “god’s kind of marriage involves a total irrevocable commitment of two people to each other.”¹⁴⁵ In this marriage you know you will have problems but you are willing and ready to face them as they unfold without retreat but headlong. That is what we call, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in riches, in pleasure and in pains; in joy and in sorrow, etc. you will still say “I do.” The third aspect involves being one flesh. Actually if one has truly left, truly determined to cleave forever, then the becoming one flesh is automatic. In the first place this is a mystery, but it takes our true sincere commitment to make the mystery a reality.

Oneness with One’s Wife before One’s Family

It has been so difficult to many families today that even after marriage, oneness with their wife is still questionable. Marriage is absolutely the decision of two couples who choose to live together. The influence of the parents should only be advisory. Once marriage has been contracted, it means that your mate’s ideas,

¹⁴⁴ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 5.

opinions, and practices come first than your families. One must eliminate deliberately some bad attitude that may tie us down to our parents.

Marriage brings about responsibilities to our wives. That of parents take another dimension, but the primary responsibility is my partner. Marriage is a serious matter to be entered into unadvisedly. Let's keep in mind those days our parents arrange marriages for their children¹⁴⁶, though it has changed today in many countries but in some other areas, is still there. Such marriage indeed suffers the issue of expected oneness of the couple because of the intrusion of the parents. They believe they made it happen so they will make it work. That creates a problem that tears the oneness of the family down. True husband is devoted to his wife first, all other things and people, like parents, are secondary.

Summary

A good and careful look at the Theological reflections of Paul was vital to the understanding of The Marital issues that were a problem to the Corinthian Church. The discussion of 1st Corinthian 7 and Ephesus 5, took us to deep seated family concerns that do not only affects the Church of Corinth but equally affects the Church of today especially the African Nigerian community.

¹⁴⁶ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 439.

The Relationship between Husband and Wife

This was an issue of being a celibate even while married. To Paul, we saw that celibacy was good only for those who want to dedicate themselves to the service of God. To the married, it wasn't a sin to be married. And as married couples, they must fulfill their marital responsibilities to each other. Each of the couple relinquishes his or her powers to the other, which is power to control one's body. These were strong instructions that they had to adhere to for the sanity of the Church and sanctity of the family.

Celibacy or Marriage for the Unmarried Widows

The idea of staying without marriage was an amazing issue that Paul had to address. From Genesis accounts, God clearly indicated that marriage was good, staying apart of marriage was dangerous but possible to the called once. There are various types of Celibacy but if not to serve God, it was not good for the spiritual health of any good standing Christian. Marriage is still outstanding and preferable to every human being, if we must withstand the enemy especially in this age of loose life of immorality everywhere.

Divorce: Those Married to Believers and Those Married to Unbelievers

Paul never bothered to talk about the consequences of divorce. His focus was a look at creation which gives us God's intentions. No divorce was intended at creation. Paul emphasis that marriage was for life even when marriage to an unbeliever. Unless he or she was the one insisting to leave, in this case you will have no obligation. God called us to peace with one another.

The Principles of “Remain as You Are”

Paul in First Corinthians 7: 17-24, addresses an important issue of a Christian social status. Paul believes that the providence of God has much to do with the social status of his Children's social boundaries. The bottom line of Paul's analysis of a child of God's station is basically, 'stay as you were when God called you' Christianity has rendered the social distinction of Gentile and Jew, slave and free, male and female, married and single void. They no longer count in the new found faith in Christ. Any effort to force them on the Church, they give reason for chaos in the Church. They were not to undo their social status when God met them.

Advice of Marriage for the Betrothed and for Widows

Paul started by advising the unmarried 'virgins' or singles that they should remain single though marrying will not be a sin, Paul's teachings in this chapter that once you are married, your first responsibility, which is an act of worship, is to your wife and family. Paul in this presentation from verses 25- 40, he gave the warning three times about the end and doom of the world. They were to take heed not to be so concern about this earth that was soon coming to an end.

One Wife to One Husband

Paul had to make things clear here that man was meant to marry only one wife. Right from the creation and the teachings of Jesus, marriage was “one wife one husband,” anything more than this was not from God but the stubbornness of man for his selfish reasons.

Fulfill Each Other's Needs Bodily

If the Corinthians were filled with rampant issues of sexual immorality, it was wise that each family should be seen fulfilling his or her conjugal responsibility.

Frustrating one another was a doorway for Satan to come in to destroy the purity of the family. In this case, Paul made sure to give this order, of fulfilling of sexual responsibility to his or her partner.

Do Not Deprive Each Other

Since after marriage one did not have authority over one's body, it is only wise that you must not deprive one another. It will then become a disobedience to scriptures to do so and will open up a doorway for Satan to tempt the family.

Giving Self to Prayer

Sex, by Paul's presentations, is a mutual understanding of both partners. Abstinence from sex, based on what was happening in the society of Corinth. The only thing Paul gave that could stop sex was time to pray and watch, but with a warning, that it should be made short and must not be a force on the other partner but the two must agree. This was to be a mutual agreement to do so.

Coming Together Again for Sexual Fulfillment

Prayer should not be an excuse for not fulfilling sexual duties to one's partner. Paul had to categorically warn that, the couples praying must come together again for sexual fulfillments. Sexual immorality was so bad that each family was to be careful to maintain the sanctity of the family.

Marriage Is a Gift

To every man, marriage is a gift. Man was lonely before God choose to have a woman to be his help mate and suitable companion. This must be appreciated and honored. Paul is saying we need to keep what God has wished for us for our happiness.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Paul in Ephesians focuses on the responsibilities of each couple, including the Children. Here h set order in the family.

The Imitation of Christ:

From Ephesians passages, Paul tells the Family to be imitators of Christ in being obedient to the responsibilities God has given us. Just as Christ was obedient to God, He was not less than God. We should also do the same.

Submission and Love

The family is adjoined to work ion submission to one another. Still taken the example of Christ who submitted to God in everything.

Love of Wife as His Own Body

No man can hate or maltreat his own body. Likewise God expects us to love our wives like that. This was a clear reminder that we are one body, one flesh, one bone. There should not be hindrance to one union of husband and wife.

A Man Must Leave His Father and Mother

The bible was not in doubt that, the man was the one to leave his father and mother to be with his wife. Not the other way round. Many cultures have exchanged this provision. The rather make the woman to leave her father and mother to be join to the man. This has made women to be seen as not having importance, made them to look like second class citizens in the house. This must be change to the original plan of God.

Oneness with One's Wife before One's Family

The wife is primarily married to the man not the entire family of the man like some cultures believe. It is the two becoming one. The both of them then take care of their families not one being attached to his or her family to the detriment of the other couple. Parents, after marriage are only suppose to be advisory not forcing themselves into their children's' families.

Summary Statement

The Corinthian Church faced with the immoral behavior of the society, caused by the Goddess Temple whose religious worship encourages sexuality. The Church founded by Paul was confused with diver's opinions concerning marriage and family life of the believers. Because the Corinthian want to be spiritual before God, questions of, whether one should marry or remain alone to serve God came up. Some even felt that married people could even stay without sex thereby creating problem for the partner since sexual immorality was just the other of the day. Some even believed that they could be celibates. Issues of marriage and home, has been

addressed by Paul to bring mutuality in every home. Both husband and wife were equal before God and must be responsible to each other. In Ephesians, we see how Paul was able to tell the couples that each person has a role to play. But for the wives to submit and the husbands to love, which one is the highest? They both were to serve God faithfully in this. We could see how Paul clearly told the family that just as Christ related to the Church, so the Man must love and bring up the family like Christ does the church.

These are great message to all families of the world. It is indeed a great message to the Nigerian Christians who have allowed culture to control most of their activities for the home. The relationship of husband and wife not the way Paul has elaborated in 1 Corinthian & and Ephesians 5:27-40. The African Nigerian Church needs these practical Christian teaching of Paul concerning Marriage and family.

Introducing the Marriage Course

A Car moves well because it has an engine that is being lubricated by engine oil, tires that grip the ground, breaks that sops the car when applied, etc. Once the oil has remain for long without change, the fluid finish from the break pot, the tires won out without replacement, the car will only last as long as the oil in it will be able to lubricate it. The breaks will only coach as the brake fluid is still available. The tires will only grip the ground if the thread is still there. Constant care is needed for the

life of a car to keep functioning well. "Regular checks ups of 'help a Car run-smoothly and reduces the risk of the break down"¹⁴⁷ So it is with the family.

The best sports professionals who win trophies, it takes a discipline of dedication to practice, prepare day in day out to be sure he or she has discipline him or her until the trophy is won. One has to practice daily the techniques required for that game. Until the target is met, no rest is important. They "...spend hours being Coached and perfecting their techniques"¹⁴⁸ so it is with the family. The family needs time, practice, mastering of the techniques of the home management to be happy.

"The greatest achievements in life take practice, training, and dedication,"¹⁴⁹ it is the same with marriage. The Marriage Course wishes to make the family strong, loving, and life long relationship of husband and wife going through the principles and using friendly environment to communicate and discuss family issues that are individually done and not meant to be shared with others. They are family issues are best understood and appropriated by the concern family.

It takes effort of the couple to have a strong, loving and lifelong relationship doesn't happen by chance, it takes efforts and dedication to keep the fun and romance alive.¹⁵⁰ The Marriage Course is saying, we can all learn how to make even the happiest of marriage better.

¹⁴⁷ The Alpha Marriage Course USA-Lara.

¹⁴⁸ Alpha Marriage Course.

¹⁴⁹ Alpha Marriage Course.

¹⁵⁰ Alpha Marriage Course.

How does the Marriage course achieve strengthening families to become better? The Marriage Course presents seven sessions of teachings in a relaxed comfortable atmosphere for both couples. The seven sessions includes; 1. Building strong foundations, 2. The art of communications, 3. Love in action, 4. Resolving conflict, 5. The power of forgiveness, 6. Parents and in-laws, and 7. Good sex. These topics covers almost every area of family endeavors. Most of these items are issues that Paul tried to resolve in the Corinthian passages and in Ephesians. These topics, contextualized will serve the Nigerian Christian homes to take care of their wives and minimize if not erase the cultural pollution of the African Nigerian homes.

One the writer feels is left out is the development of a constant counseling activity for the couple's day to day life. Our people need a constant reminder because the cultural ideals have eaten into our fabrics and can't easily remove without a constant day to day fight. We do not necessarily need professional counselors. We need lay men and pastors who have understood what we are dealing with and are ready to have some basic counseling principles which may be contextualized to meet our Nigerian need. Part of my work therefore will be dedicated to bridge this gap that the marriage course did not focus on.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Thus far in chapter one and two, The writer have stated that the Nigerian Church has, Men act one way in the church and another way at home, Women do not have power to say anything at home, How men relate to their children, Disrespect from the sons to the Mothers, Preferential treatment for the first born son and all the males, Disrespect of the daughters by both the fathers and the sons, and The problem of in-laws in the Nigerian context, issues with marriage. These issues are so deep rooted that need special attention using any means that can uproot or neutralize what has been there from birth in every African man and woman. Chapter one has shown the setting and context of the Nigerian cultural situation and chapter two the Theological and Biblical basis for addressing these issues. These included the discussion of 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and Ephesians 5:21-40.

In this chapter, there is need to review the sources that the writer has used or relied upon to come to my methodology for addressing the issues in Nigerian Christian Marriages through bible study and the Marriage course. In this process, the areas of emphasis of each source will be paraphrased as a heading of each discussion of the material.

Creativity in Christian Marriage

Mark Lee in his book, *Creating Christian Marriage*,¹ presented and dealt with several issues of marriage. He presented six parts which included Marriage, Religion, Intimacy, Maturity, Mutuality, Money, and Maturity. He has learned from 34 years of marriage with 4 children and four grandchildren what it takes to put creativity into a Christian marriage. He shared from his wide experience of being a husband, father. He was equally a marriage counselor; this gave him the acquired qualifications to be able to treat with all sense of wisdom, family happy life of husband and wife. After Lee has laid a good foundation and defined the Christian marriage, and it's superiority over the so called "living together arrangement which people call marriage, and many other non-marriages, he went ahead to deal with practical issues that are common to all marriages, to all couples.

The problems that are practically affecting the Christian marriages everywhere includes:

1. The dangers in a divided faith marriage, which is rampant today. Is like men are scarce around so any one just in love wither a Christian or not does not seems to matter anymore. This is disastrous to the Church. Mark gives ways on how to deal with conflicts and disagreements regarding religion. Paul has been clear on this issue of being unequally married to an unbeliever. In the first place, a child of God should not do so and if they married before

¹ Mark Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1976).

becoming Christians, Paul made it clear what can be done as discussed in chapter two.

2. Mark highlighted the problems of lack of sexual satisfaction that husband and wife give to each other. He was able to give practical ways to work at sexual adjustment. In fact he clearly stated that “failure in sexual intimacy often is a result of unrealistic expectations on the part of one or both partners”.² This was excellent work o bringing the family together.

3. Every human being is born special with likes and dislikes, coming from different family backgrounds. Lee was able to highlight such differences in personal interests and he showed how to build a strong relationship despite conflicting tastes and preferences each manifests.

4. One major area that has been destroying families especially in African Nigeria families is Money. It has been a disease in the home. Everybody wants to manage his or her money. Poverty indeed has contributed to this problem. Mark Lee, in his book, was able to give the meaning of money in our marriage and how to work together in handling financial problems carefully.

5. He gave some teachings on the later life of the family. This has to do with the problem of advancing in age and how to deal with the empty nest when the children are no longer with them.

Mark Lee has given a material that those who are married will find guidance to those issues that disrobed our family joy. Even those who are not married yet will

² Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 87.

begin to learn that you don't just wake up to see a happy home, you work at it as both adjust their experiences to suit each other. He has proposed in one of his Headings that "Marriage is for better, Not for Worse"³ in as much as the expectation is clear from his elaborations that man and woman need to enter into marriage with that expectation that it is going to be for better, for best, by implications, the nature of human being makes it possible rather to enter marriage with that preparedness that things may go bad but must be ready not to be taken off guard to face the issues. And such experience will bring about tomorrow's joy. Many individuals may not be ready psychologically and spiritually to think so positive when problems bounce on them to see it that it is for better not for worst. In fact such worst issues are a vehicle we must not avoid but ride to maturity of our homes. The Nigerian community will easily attach meanings to this statement, to mean "the Pentecostal's idea of positive thinking that there is no problem when the problem is actually there."⁴ 'To deny that the problem is not there is to have no faith at all', coming from the belief that faith in God comes as a result of weakness on our part that we have to put our trust in God to overcome for us such impediments.

Strengthening the Christian Marriage

Wayne A Mack has presented his ideals in a book well written to Strengthen Christian marriage. His approach to the destabilizing behavior of many homes is to

³ Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 38.

⁴ The Nigerian, general understanding of the word, 'for better but not for worst,' especially coming from the Evangelicals.

go back to the basis, a go back to the one who instituted the marriage in the first place. His blue prints are necessary if the Christian home must make any head way to happiness. He believes whichever term one can use to describe one's marriage, there are ways to make it better. The reason is simple; God has designed marriage to be a relationship of deep unity not surface of the family. He has given it strength to survive all the huddles you can ever experience in marriage life. Marital harmony is not an impossible idea and ideal no matter how bad we feel the marriage has gone. Mark has taken us to the bible directly highlighting insights and practical information on marital roles, communication, finances, sex, child rearing, and family worship. This is a complete guide to the husband and wife to go back to the Bible to make their family happy as God intended it to be a happy harmonious home.

Mack, in his introduction, gave a practical example of being one flesh which is against scientific formula. In mathematics every educated person knows that when you bring one thing and you bring another, it becomes two. How comes that in marriage it is said one plus one equals to one? That is mathematical blunder. But marriage is beyond what man can understand. Mack puts it this way "one plus one equals one may not be an accurate mathematical concept, but it is an accurate description of God's intention for the marriage relationship."⁵ But why, 'Because God created it.' The same God who made the world He made one plus one equals one. Those that have refused to accept this formula continue to struggle with

⁵ Wayne A. Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1977), ix.

understanding what will possibly bring that happiness. But they can never have it perpetually because something is missing, obedience to the creator in Genesis 2:24.

What was in God's mind when he created man, the first human and later said it was not good for the first human to be alone, God had to make a woman out of man. Mack says there are blueprints of God clearly stated in the Bible in Genesis 2:18-25. The concept of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh is clearly defined. In fact, repeated in other passages of the bible.⁶ Mark did a wonderful job in clearly explaining these passages to the understanding of every lay man. The directives of God is leave- cleave (be united)-to your wife (one flesh)⁷ husband and wife need to know they are one body and can't be separated as far as they both remain breathing on this earth.

The wife and the husband have their own peculiar duties. The man is mandated to love and care for the wife. To so care for that he will present her to God spotless. Love does everything. The woman also is to be responsible to respect her husband either he is good or not. The respect has no condition attached just like the love has no condition attached. Can you imagine what family will be if we all respect and all one this command, fabulous. Do you know that God's set standard is not for Him, He does not need it for what? He is the prince of peace, He is love, and He is harmony. The person that needs it is me and you, humans. Therefore refusing to do what God ask us to do, who suffers. Who loses? So we cheat and create

⁶ Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7-8, and Ephesians 5:31.

⁷ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 1-9.

problems for ourselves, things that are simply avoidable by simple obedience.

Everybody wants to claim rights, people want to be independent of another, we create human ways to be happy in our selfishness, and it can't work. Absolute peace will come in absolute obedience to God's word for us.

Can we ever achieve deep oneness as discussed about without good communication? It can't be. Mack has clearly stated that "deep oneness can be achieved only where good communication exists."⁸ Wayne A Mack has presented a good material leading to good family communication and also giving some advices and recommending other sources of getting such good level of communication between husband and wife. "No two people can effectively walk together, work together, or live together without a good communications system."⁹ First like he started by quoting Amos 3:3 which says, "Can two walk together except they be agreed," it must begin with the agreement of two people to live together for life, to trust and believe in each other. Otherwise the communication cannot work. Marriage can completely be destroyed without cogent reasons just because we refused to talk and listen to each other. Apart of our relationship to God as individuals, God intends that the marriage relationship to be the closest of all interpersonal relationships."¹⁰ As discussed earlier, if we want to serve God without any barrier, it may be better the not to marry, but once you are marriage it is obligatory to follow the bible principles of marriage life otherwise we are just being

⁸ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 55.

⁹ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 55.

¹⁰ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 56.

deliberately stubborn and disobedient to God Himself who founded marriage and left His blueprints clearly stated.

If the leaving, the cleaving and the becoming one flesh is obeyed, can sex be a problem? How? When we are one and communicate normally, sex will never be a problem because we will understand each other. Only refusal to abide by God's guiding principles that sexual problem destabilizes the family. Mack gave a good remedy of tackling sexual problems if they arise.

Marriage to Last Forever without Adultery and Incest

In the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, marriage was well discussed. A look at it will help to see the underlying principles that every couple needs to be careful of. The article presented here is vital because it was writing addressing the issues that were especially raised in the Church of Corinth which are quite similar in today's Church and society. Four major issues were presented to Paul; marriage itself, Divorce, adultery and incest.

G. F. Hawthorne in his article has reminded us how important the Old Testament writers valued marriage. He said, "...they understood marriage to be the perpetuation of that fundamental social unit which God was said to have created when He formed one man from the dust of the ground and fashion one woman from him and brought her to him to be his soul partner, thus becoming 'one flesh' with him."¹¹ Greco-Roman world had no problem with this teaching because they

¹¹ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 595.

believed in monogamous and for life.¹² They seem to have been closer to obeying the bible than the Jewish Torah where we saw a polygamous life in practice. Quoting Modestinus Digesta 23.2.1, Hawthorne wrote that “a lifelong partnership, and a sharing of civil and religious rights”¹³ indeed culture recorded in the OT fall short of this monogamous life. Just like the African understanding, the wife was seen as a property of the man, her husband who is seen as the master of his wife just as a slave to his master. But we see in the life of three OT leaders like Noah, Isaac and Joseph who were monogamous, they are a good example of love and respect to their wives. They treated the women as equal with them and they were faithful to their wives. We see in their lives prosperity, happiness, respect and fidelity. This helps us to see that the idea of God in Genesis was still respected, not forgotten by those who choose to obey Him. It is encouraging to note clearly the practice of what God intended in the life of the faithful and the actual result of one man one wife.¹⁴

Divorce was actually perceived as something wrong, contrary to God. People see it as an action hated by God.¹⁵ In Mark 10:5, it seems there was an allowance for the stubbornness of the people’s hearts but not as if God approves of it. In the NT it seems divorce was allowed because of unfaithfulness. But it poses a danger that many don’t care to observe ones they are blinded by the pursuit of divorce even from the reason of unfaithfulness. No remarriage. You stand alone until the other

¹² Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 595.

¹³ Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Paul and His Letters*, 595.

¹⁴ See 2 Kings 4:8-25; Psalms 128; Proverbs 31; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Malachi 2:14.

¹⁵ Malachi 2:16.

partner is more.¹⁶ Which one will have been better, to forgive and work things out or to divorce and burn in passion and lust. Contrary to our time adultery even in OT was not considered for divorce. It was death by stoning also by burning.¹⁷ We must rule it out that divorce is not an option that we should rely on. It may be more dangerous to our spiritual life than helping you. We must answer this question; Is there any sin God has asked us not to forgive? Marriage is a permanent relationship even in weakness, the other strong partner should help bring up the weak is that not why we must carry each other's burden? What if Jesus decides to treat us the way we treat others?

On whether one can choose to be alone, apart from Paul, Jesus never encouraged it. He only saw celibacy as a charism,¹⁸ a gift from God for those whom God wishes to give. Our study of Paul's teachings was clearly understood that one could choose to stay as celibate but only to dedicate his life into complete service of God. Otherwise it is a delicate and self-afflicted trouble that only few can stand being faithful to God.

Marital Issues in First Corinthians 7:1-40

One of my major influences is David E. Garland in his commentary on the book of 1 Corinthians. His presentations, divisions of 1Corinthians 7:1-40 were just what I liked and used in my presentation of the problems of the Church in my

¹⁶ Mark 10:11-12; Matthew 5:31; 19:9; Luke 16:18.

¹⁷ Leviticus 20:10; Genesis 38:24.

¹⁸ Matthew 19:10-12.

chapter two. From this 1 Corinthians 7, three major issues are very clearly stated, Sexual relationship, Divorce, and marriage. Garland presented issues that were treated by Paul to include: sexual relations within marriage, the choice of celibacy for the unmarried, remarriage for widows, decisions related to divorce, and the decision whether to marry or not¹⁹. Do not forget, Paul was not giving a normal teaching but was responding to problems in the Church presented to him while away from the Church. Garland calls it "... the gamut issues relating to marriage."²⁰ The Corinthian were already holding erroneous options, he had to use wisdom to tackle those issues that the community had helped to 'fuel'. It was not an easy task; this must be understood by any reader.

In 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Garland followed Paul to deal with sexual relations within marriage.²¹ With so many other arguments others have given for or against Paul's approach to the issue, the bottom-line is what the bible clearly stated. Because of fornications, let every person have his wife or her husband. Let them fulfill their sexual duties to each other without hesitation. It is obligatory to do so. Neither of them have power over their own bodies anymore; therefore they must not deprive each other of sex when needed because for lack of self control many may fall.

1 Corinthian 7:6-9, deals with the problem of Celibacy and Marriage for the Unmarried and widows. Like I said earlier the categorization of Garland discussion of

¹⁹ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 242.

²⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 242.

²¹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 246.

the issues fits my understanding. Many writers do not fill this was the likely way to do it. Garland himself has said that “treating 7:6-9 as a separate unit distinct from 7:1-5 and 10-16 goes against the grain of the majority of commentaries and the printed texts but makes the best sense of the context.”²² After verse 5, Paul started by asserting his authority in the other matters that followed. And the problem of celibacy was serious matter more so that Paul himself at this point was not married and is like the Corinthians preferred being alone. Paul in any way had to subside and agree with the Corinthians but with a clear warning, only to serve God. But neither did he condemn those who are married or are to marry. He has initially warned that they should get married to avoid sin of fornication and to yield sexually to their spouses because of the passion that they may burn with. Celibacy would not have been a good option, but if it is to be dedicated to God who has called some people for that, it is an accepted gift. One must not be coerced into it. “Celibacy is good, but it is not for everyone.”²³ It is not created by vow but those who have received God’s gift, and is anchored by them.²⁴ Paul here was not treating what is the highest good but what is good for the individual who stands alone before God his maker.

Divorce for those married to Christians and for those married to unbeliever was another bone of contention in the Church 1cor.7:10-16. Paul was not ready to develop a teaching on divorce, whether it is legal or not legal, and whether a divorce person can remarry or not. The treatment concerns the issue of an unbelieving

²² Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 267.

²³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 267.

²⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 267.

partner insisting to live despite the willingness and effort of the Christian for the partner to stay for the benefit of the children especially. "... Paul permits divorce only when it is forced upon the Christian by the unbelieving spouse."²⁵ Paul made it clear that the prohibition of divorce was not his ideas but that of God right from creation, echoed by Jesus Christ. A Christian must not divorce, even an unbelieving partner. This is because the unbelieving one is sanctified by the Christian, and the children are avoided being unclean. It is an opportunity to save the unbelieving one.²⁶ Normally the family problem the believer may be facing, it is immaterial here, and Paul says no divorce only if the unbelieving choose to leave and not because you maltreated her so she could decide to leave.

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 takes us to an abrupt shift to the topic of circumcision or no circumcision, slavery and freedom. Others have argued why Paul should jump to the topic of circumcision or not, slavery or freedom. Whatever the arguments are, we got to ask "what do uncircumcision and circumcision, slavery and freedom, have to do with marriage, divorce, and celibacy? They illustrate the divine principles that no earthly status, such as one's racial heritage or social standing, is incompatible with the Christian's calling by God."²⁷ Whatever position you were when you receive Christ, circumcise or not, slave or free, you cannot undo it for spirituality. In fact, accepting the status you are in is a mark of spiritual growth. What matters is keeping the commandments of God in verse 19. "A Christian does not have to seek 'the right

²⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 278.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

²⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

situation' in order to enjoy Christian freedom or to serve God's called effectively."²⁸

Therefore, Paul insisted that every one remain were God called them and live accordingly. The salvation comes to them without requiring change of ethnic, social nor domestic status.

At the final slate, Garland presented the issue of the betrothed and the widows in 1Cor. 7;25-40. It seems in this culture Paul was addressing issues, the man had upper hand in decision making. The issue of being betrothed becomes an issue the male was to decide whether or not to marry. Paul offers the solution of remain as you are. In this case you do not break a betrothal nor do not seek a wife. Paul insists though that choosing to marriage is not a sin.²⁹ But he gave four reasons to prefer the other option as given by Garland.³⁰ 1. That they should be mindful of the coming of the lord Jesus Christ. Here, I think, Paul was eluded by the fact that Jesus was coming soon, so marriage may not be necessary, let's just get prepared and serve God as we wait for His coming. In another word, I see Paul saying the heavenly expectation was more important than the earthly enjoyment of a wife or husband, so why waste time? In this case, like Garland puts it, "Christians can evaluate their choices in life from the perspective of the need that has come so near (7:29-31)"³¹ one could understand why Paul therefore choice not to marry but serve God all his life going from place to place without hesitation or anything to draw him back like

²⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

²⁹ 1 Cor. 7:28,36.

³⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 317.

³¹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 317.

family. 2. From 7:28, marriage brings trouble in the flesh. Indeed no family on this earth is without problem at one time or the other. It is our daily efforts that must reduce them. Family in itself is work and dedication to make it happy. Once you are not ready for these challenges, it means you not ready to marry, stay away, but be careful only to please God. 3. Marriage, surely, brings responsibilities, you like it or not, they are there and refusal to assume your responsibilities makes your home chaotic and unbearable. It takes away the joy of marriage completely. Therefore if you want to serve God without divided heart, singleness is better. The choice is yours to make. 4. Finally, "the form of this world, with its systems, values, and statuses, is passing off the stage. Everything belonging to this world is lame –duck, marriage included."³² Paul wanted the Corinthians to think of the coming Kingdom, the coming of our lord Jesus Christ which is more than any earthly joy that one will ever experience here on earth. The recommendation of Paul is not belated; the Church today stands a better chance to heed to his advices. We could see clearly that the world is ending by the fulfillment of all Jesus told us to watch in Mathew chapter twenty four. Nonetheless, this is a personal decision. Paul insisted in his opening passages, if you cannot bible to stand get married to avoid sin of fornication and adultery. Choosing to stay alone must only be to serve God as we wait for His coming soon.

³² Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 317-318.

The Commentary on the Pauline Epistles by Charles B William³³ was specifically helpful in describing some key words and phrases of every passage visited. For example the word or phrase, prevalent of sexual immorality, Williams says, it is in plural to indicate the prevalent of sex sin – especially among unmarried people. Based on research conducted by many scholars, it is not an argument to say that the Corinthian were in a city with special goddess of sex with her temple prominently located in Corinth. Williams has writing that in the temple was many beautiful maidens who were just there for men to indulge their passions as an act of worship.³⁴ This must have prompted Paul to give instruction that each man should have his wife and each wife her husband.

The word Paul uses in verse 12 and 13 “I say, not the Lord.”³⁵ Is very vital, to be explained. This was to say that Jesus in person did not say anything about this issue to be discussed. Paul was saying this is my instructions based on how I feel led by the Holy Spiritual. We must be careful to note that all scripture is inspired by God.³⁶ Paul was not assuming control of instruction based on his human intellect but simply saying Jesus did not make any statement and regard to these issues but the Spirit is saying through me that this is how marriage should be as regarding a believer married to an unbeliever. Such definition of words was very important to the understanding of the context of the passage in question.

³³ Charles B. Williams, *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1953), 120-126.

³⁴ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 121.

³⁵ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 122.

³⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Wiersbe's Expository outlines on the New Testament,³⁷ was very remarkable in discussing how the Modern Liberals critics accuse Paul of being cruel to women in his teaching. Nothing could be more important to every preacher and teacher of the word of God to be truthful to the passages of the bible. Changing them to suit us is not having the fear of God in our hearts. Then we will be victims of just trying to do things to please people and not God who called us and own the work. Nothing could be farther from the truth.³⁸ But when we observe around the ministry of Paul, he has raised the position of women high. Warren wrote that "Paul's ministry of the Gospel did more to raise the position of women than people realize."³⁹ His ministry improved the position of Women and Children, which in the Jewish customs were less recognized.

Warren presented a good foundation before going the passages of 1Corinthians 7,⁴⁰ which the writer wish to recall here. One thing to note is; The Corinth was noted for its immorality and lack of standards for the home; 2. That Paul was dealing with local problems that we may not face in the same way today; 3 that it was a time of persecution for the Christians (v. 26). Warren therefore divided his presentations in three groups. He Unmarried Christians (1 Cor. 1-9); Christians married to unsaved partners (7:10-24); Parents of marriageable Girls (7:25-40). All the presentations were to resolve problems in the Church of Corinth.

³⁷ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 437-440.

³⁸ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 437.

³⁹ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 437.

⁴⁰ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 437.

Michael J. Gorman in his *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, describes the Church of Corinth as confused people about marriage.⁴¹ Probably because of the environment they found themselves. The fact remains that they were confused particularly in the area of sexuality. "It appears that the believers in Corinth were generally confused about the place of sexuality in the lives of those who belong to Christ."⁴² At this point Gorman alleged that questions of marriage came up as a result of Paul's teachings to the Corinthians. The Corinthian experience, the problems that arose will have been because of Paul's teachings otherwise they would have asked him there and then. The Community where the Church belonged were known of practicing sexuality because of the Temple goddess worship which gave prominence to sex activities as part of worship. The confusion wouldn't have been set by Paul. It is clear also that Paul was not ready to give any teaching on those issues rather as a father to them, when they approached him because they needed the right action to all their problems, he proffered solutions based on Jesus' teachings and his own beliefs.

The Role of Husband and Wife in Ephesians 5:21-40

Craig S. Keener has taken time to write a book particularly on Paul's teachings concerning women. The writer took particular area of interest that has to do with the role of women in his part two which talks of Paul telling the women to be

⁴¹ Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 252.

⁴² Gorman, *Crucified Lord*, 252.

submissive to their husbands and the other part which he dealt with Men loving their wives in his title mutual submission. The Ephesians book is not telling us who to marry or not to marry but that whosoever you marry, you are obliged to love and respect. Keener has observed the truth that “many marriages today are troubled with the tension of openly conflicting wills.”⁴³ In many families, everyone would like to exercise his or her will, rights, and desires. What will then be that outcome? Conflict, which will definitely, disrobe the joy of the home. God did not wish it that way, there has to be some roles to regulate the behavior and character of each member of the family for peace to reign. The Husband and wife must cooperate together in an ideal biblical home of love to work together not one seeking his or her own ways over the other or feels for neither one reason nor other more important than the partner. That is exactly the presentation of Ephesians 5:22-6:9. These issues of respecting and submission and loving without conditions attached, are not easily obtainable. It will truly take the heart first submitted to Christ to achieve simplicity of heart to comply. In this case, Keener observed correctly then fact that “Paul gives Christ’s death as a standard for love, and our allegiance to Christ as the standard for submission...”⁴⁴ the way Paul approach this discussion is very important taking into account the stubbornness of man who prefers to do things his own way.

⁴³ Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 136.

⁴⁴ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 136.

Keener was deliberate in surveying the passage of Ephesians 5:18-21. This gave him a good footing to discuss “submission’ in the following passages of Ephesians 5:22-33. He said, “because the instructions to husbands and wives are part of a larger section of household codes that also addresses father and child and master and slave relationships...”⁴⁵ Paul places the submission of the wives squarely on mutual ground and qualifies her husband’s position of authority as one of loving service.

Submission to every Child of God is very important. It is an act of surrendering to God in faith when we worship Him, so it is more like; let’s submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. It is a general principle to all Believers. When women submit to their husbands, they need to know it is a general phenomenon, and submission to him is submission to God through Christ who died in Submission to God to save mankind. It has nothing whatsoever to do with inferiority complex or maltreatment of women by Paul as some people have suggested. The must not forget is the fact that submitting to ourselves, to our husband or wives in love, is not unto them, but in the fear of the lord, unto the lord.

Fergusson, on the hand elaborated the issue of husbands love your wives in Ephesians 5:25. He highlighted that Paul told the husbands particularly to love because man was about to fail in this regard and by implication abuse the authority God has given the man over the wife, by proving rigorous and bitter against her

⁴⁵ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 136.

Col.3:19.⁴⁶ Husbands are not to dominate their wives, it is contrary to the ordinances yet seeing the nature of man who will always wish to exercise authority over her, Paul made it 'point blank', men must love their wives as Christ love the Church and gave his life for her. The greatest duty of man that he ought to learn daily all his life is how to love his wife. No matter how highly place you are in life or community, one responsibility God will judge you with, whether you truly love your wife without conditions attached.

Warren is seeing that this should be a pleasure-able venture.⁴⁷ Just as Christ loves the Church and the Church submits to him, the Spirit takes control and brings peace and harmony. So it is with the home the family. "The secret of harmony in the home and on the job is the fullness of the Holy spirit. The unity of the Church and the harmony of the home both depend on the Spirit."⁴⁸ It is the power within not the pressure without that holds the Church and the home together. So the principle of wives respect and submit to their husbands as unto Christ , and husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church was to bring the really of harmony to play. When we are right with God we will be right with each other.⁴⁹ This was a well thought out principle by Paul to bring the family to note that marriage is not just between husband and wives but God is at the centre of it. The more we honor and fear God,

⁴⁶ James Fergusson and David Dickson, *The Epistles of Paul* (London, UK: Banner of Truth, 1978), 244.

⁴⁷ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 551-552.

⁴⁸ Ephesians 4:3; 5:18.

⁴⁹ Wiersbe, *Exegetical Outlines*, 552 .

the strongly our families will be. If we kick out God in our homes, no formula can your home.

To those women who believe Paul is an enemy of women because he has always ask them to be respectful and submissive to their husbands not only from the passages the writer decides to focus on, Williams clearly address the modern women especially to see that Paul is found of respecting and promoting women. Facts against this evaluation are seen in his commendation of seven women in Romans 16. Women whom he knew as great women and servants of God. Williams said, "He tenderly greets them as noble Christian; he appreciates them for their personal worth and for their sacrificial service to the Lord."⁵⁰ Paul has equally written asking his brothers in the Lord to help the women in Philippi who have labored side by side with him in the gospel.⁵¹ These women included: Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, and many others in the early Churches.⁵² Biblical truths are not easily accepted mostly because we struggle with our humans feelings which are subject to defending what we want or protecting our personal believes even when there are clear evidences of the other side. God the author of the word has ordered things they way are, compliance can give one that innate peace that you are pleasing God not man than to struggle and argue unnecessarily.

Looking at the Church of Corinth, confusion was just everywhere on the issues of marriage especially as it touches on sexual activities. Today's world is no

⁵⁰ Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 393.

⁵¹ Philippians 4:3.

⁵² Williams, *Pauline Epistles*, 391.

different. People are confused on what is the Christian standard looking at the world in a mirror. Marva Dawn in her book *Sexual Character* offers a clear, fresh biblical understanding of human sexuality. Marva discusses the importance noticing the difference between social and genital sexuality. She looked at the forces of our present technological society that destroys true intimacy of husband and wife. She raises questions and discussing them on issues like; friendship, marriage, divorce, teenage, homosexuality, and abortion. She has said, "...that the truths of Christianity include accurate, workable, and delightful visions and guidelines for human sexuality."⁵³ To those who are willing to strengthen the Church and its married and single members, this is a good book that engages and carries every thought along. She strongly believes in the word of God, such believe have transforming power to change things around for good.

She presented her book in three parts; the basis of new thinking about sexuality in part one. In part two, she looked at the God's design for sexual Character. The third chapter raises questions from ethics of character for practical application to issues of our day. All pastors, teachers, leaders, and lay men alike, if we must change our world, if we must lead the way for believers to follow in this world no confusion, we need to read and tell others the way out.

Paul, the apostle has given adequate answers to some marital questions raised by the Corinthian Church on the issues of marriage that rangiest from the relationship of Husband and Wife, the issue of celibacy, the issue of divorce,

⁵³ Marva J. Dawn, *Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), xii.

marriage of believers to unbelievers, staying without marriage, and the likes. He clearly explained what God intended marriage to be and how they were to be careful to protect themselves without allowing the enemy the advantage to tempt them since the Corinthian Church was facing immoral environment. Similarly, in Ephesians 5, Paul further clarify and taught how the family was suppose to live and exist today and when Children are born, how the relationship was going to become. Though the issue of children was not covered in the research, it is good to know that Paul gave specific roles of the Husband, the wife and the Children in the home. This was to bring peace and harmony in the house.

The African Nigerian Christians suffer similar issues that were raised by the Church. They include the relationship of husband and wife before during and after marriage, the marrying of the entire family of the man not just the man, which gives undue powers to the man's family to maltreat her. We saw how a woman is considered less than man at home. She is only good for sex and given birth to children. The male child's position at home, elevated even more than that of the mother being a woman. Women are maltreated because they are seen as second class citizens. Effort was therefore made to encourage the African Nigerian Christians to go back to the bible than allow the cultural influence gotten from the earliest years of the child to direct the affairs of the marriage and home.

The Marriage Course, which is organized by Alpha, was introduced. They conduct seven section of teaching and interaction with husband and wife on issues to bring the family together to practice mostly what is taught by scripture on Christian marriage and long life of happy marriage life, which has transformed many homes. We are going to talk more on that and to look at ways such program can be

utilized and contextualized together with the teachings in 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5 for the African Nigerian Christians who may be facing these cultural obstacle to implementing biblical marriage principles in their homes thereby robbing them of the happiness and God intended harmony of the marriage He instituted.

Introduction of the Marriage Course

As indicated earlier, a program which was started by a family that has been married for more than 30 years ago, they got married in 1976 and have been together till date. Nicky and Sila Lee founded this Alpha Marriage course to help families face the challenges of our time against the intended happiness and joy of married. Nicky Gumbel in his forward of the major books used for this course clearly states that “marriage is under attack in our society.”⁵⁴ Who will there doubt this? Quiet noticeable is the fact that marital issues are universal. It may differ only in some areas and emphasis of treatment, but our human culture has always been against the biblical conduct of marriage and home.

The question that has to be asked is, what is the marriage Course? From there presentation one can easily say, it is a “seven session course set in a fantastic atmosphere. You will be served a candlelit meal and/or coffee, tea and desert at a romantic table for two while listening to practical talks that are informative and fun, either given live or played in DVD.”⁵⁵ In their presentation, there is no group work

⁵⁴ Nicky Lee and Sila Lee, *The Marriage Book* (New York, NY: Alpha Books, 2000), vii.

⁵⁵ Alpha International, *The Marriage Courses*, accessed April 12, 2016, www.themarriagecourses.org.

and nobody is asked to share anything, it is absolutely the affairs of the husband and the wife in attendance to do that. In fact during a session, they deliberately play music so that no family will hear each other as they discuss their family issues. This brings privacy to the whole procedure that I believe is excellent. In the first place family issues differ and can only be resolved by the husband and wife of each home who live together.

The Marriage Course aims at helping “couples grow closer and build a healthy relationship that will last a life time”⁵⁶ This is excellent because many enter marriage with the idea of “if” in their minds. Is like, people do not trust that, the marriage will last for life time. People’s minds are already out of God’s plan for the home even before they get into it. What a poison to lifelong marriage life. No wonder in many continents of the world divorce has been on the increase backed up by laws created by man. God is saying “No, that’s not the way I planned it. I planned marriage to be a permanent relationship. I want the husband and wife to cleave to one another.”⁵⁷ One needs to go into marriage fully aware that it is a life-long decision ‘come what may’. Wayne A. Mack has said “God’s kind of marriage involves a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other”⁵⁸ It is a worthy cause to fight for especially within the Christian folks. The legally of the Church must not be allowed to be destroy by the selfishness of humanity that undermine the teachings of God for personal desires.

⁵⁶ Alpha International, *The Marriage Courses*, accessed April 12, 2016, www.themarriagecourses.org.

⁵⁷ Mark 10:7-9.

⁵⁸ Mark, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 5.

Alpha Marriage Course targets three category of married people which includes; those in a long-term cohabiting relationship, those who have been together for over a year, and those who like their relationship to be the best it can be. The targeted people based on what we have turned the world of marriage life to be seem to be a good targeted group. Though the question that comes to mind is, if any relationship is not based on God's way of relationship, can they ever get the happiness and the lasting of relationship God desires? If in the first place your coming together as husband and wife is not biblical how possible can the biblical principles of marriage life work? Or is just a coercion of two principles of marriage being brought together to create that outside of God happiness and harmony. There is still much to learn on this.

The target of this paper is the African Nigerian Christians who have allowed culture mingle with Christianity to control their marriage and homes. This has brought about one type of life's style in the church and just another life's style, by the same couple, at home. God desires that His children maintain one life's style. Christianity is a transformation from the old life, control by self or other influences to the new life that is absolutely controlled by God through the death of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in every child of God.⁵⁹ One major reason why marriages do not work today, and one believes May not work, is because we have kicked out God in our lives. Mark Lee in his preface in the book, Creative Christian Marriage, has written that, "Christian Marriage is an ideal in the mind of God, made practical by

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Rom.12:1-2.

the application of appropriate biblical patterns which permit creative approaches to family interests and needs.”⁶⁰ Obedience to God must be first, and in fact when He is first, we don’t need the stress of making our marriage and homes work, everything will just be in place because the maker is in charge.

The Content of the Marriage Course

The Marriage Course is actually delivered in live practical talk that is informative and fun where the facilitator gives live presentation of seven sessions of the Course and in some cases, a video is watched with film clips. Time is then allowed for interaction between husband and wife only. What is the content of the seven sessions? What do they really teach? The content of these sessions is what we need to unfold one after the other in the order of presentation in Marriage Course gathering. Primarily the sessions cover seven areas but more could be added depending on the situation. In our discussion, the eight sessions will be added. They are: 1. Building strong foundations; 2. Communicate more effectively; 3. Love in action; 4. Resolving conflict; 5. the power of forgiveness; 6. Parents and in-laws; 7. Good sex; and 8. Marital Counseling for the African Pastor and the laity.

Building strong foundations: Nicky and Sila gives a good look at marriage. They saw it as a unique opportunity that one has to share our common humanity. Feeling each other’s pains and covering each other’s weaknesses. In defining marriage, Nicky and Sila goes back to the beginning of all things which included

⁶⁰ Lee, *Creative Christian Marriage*, 6.

marriage in Genesis 2:24. As two become one, they are expected to grow together which is not an automatic thing. Both must be ready to build their home. Here the emphasis the first thing in marriage is “...to accept our husband or wife as they are , rather than trying to make them into the person we had hoped they would be”⁶¹ the truth is, no matter how you try, your spouse can never be like you nor like what you want. A pertinent question is paused, why do some marriages stop working? Is because, we came in to it with romantic myth.⁶² Relationship has to be worked out. “If we want to build a strong marriage, we need to lay deep foundations.”⁶³ You don’t just wake up doing nothing to see it strong. Husband and wife have to leave together not being apart and if we want build a strong marriage, we need to lay deep foundations. In his presentation he made is clear that “marriage is the closest human relationship”⁶⁴ on earth. Fight it, achieve it together, it is possible with the maker.

If we must succeed in marriage, we must plan for it. Here they looked at time which, like he quoted “we must use time as a tool, not as a couch.”⁶⁵ The normal temptation is, once marriage has been solemnized, time together quickly cease to be a priority of the couples. The danger is, the less we have time together, the more depreciation of love and the desire of each other, the less of understanding each

⁶¹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 20.

⁶² Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 22

⁶³ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 26

⁶⁴ Nicky Lee and Sila Lee video clips.

⁶⁵ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, quoting John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

other. One easily finds himself going back to the individual you were. Really, “to deprive a marriage of time spent together is the equivalent of depriving a person of air or a plant of water.”⁶⁶ What a true description of what families rob themselves of when they do not have time to spend together. Couples need to take a day together, a vacation together, even mini honey moons of two three days is important to the growing together of the family. Parson has said, “... we need to make time for the things that we believe are important and we need to make it now”⁶⁷ family must stay in touch at all times, if we must be busy, for short time to come back again to be together.

Communicate more effectively: In this second session, Nicky and Sila focus on the art of Communication between husband and wife. Their agitations are that the husband and wife must learn to effectively talk to one another. Conversation is very important to each family. We must make an effort as every member of the family to talk to each other; it helps to open up and increases topics of conversation. Nicky and Sila suggests meal time which by the definition of companionship, it falls exactly to what the family suppose to be doing. By the original meaning of companionship, it means bread time. The family must be able to talk about their feelings. Contrary to what some of the African Nigerian families can never do culturally. Right moments are important in this regard and there need to be expression of affections as we talk to each other. Couples have to learn to recognize when one is brooding over

⁶⁶ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 28

⁶⁷ Rob Parsons, *The Money Secret* (London, UK: Hodder, 1994), 39.

something and persistent asking of questions force things out to the open. It is necessary and beneficial to work harder to keep communication flowing. Quoting James, Nicky and Sila wrote, "If I had to identify one reason for our separation it would be ineffective communications..."⁶⁸ One grew up to hear our parents tell us that "it is late to cry when the head is off"⁶⁹ this statement looks funny but very important. It is simply implying that if one refuses to do what he she ought to do, before you know it, like a dream, it may be too late to recover. No one has ever changed the clock backward apart from the maker Himself. We lose a lot and come to regret when nothing can be done again. Work at it! Work at good sustainable communication it will save you regrets tomorrow.

Folks, in the best of marriages there are no secrets between husband and wife. If you can keep secrets, it means there is no biblical marriage at all. Many families have lived in secrecy and that is what eventually undue them. Secrets bring distrust and damage the home in an unrecovered way because no matter how you try to make up in future, she or he will never have that confidence in you anymore. Our failures are better shared than kept secret because once they exploded, the family is ruined.

Indeed if we must talk to each other, we must learn to listen effectively to each other. Our tribe will say, "meda to paolo paolo kwazhin a wuenya"⁷⁰ This is an adage in Gbagyi land which simply means, "If I heard you wrongly and you heard me

⁶⁸ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 46.

⁶⁹ An adage very common in Nigeria to get you prepared always.

⁷⁰ Gbagyi language in Nigeria Middle Belt.

wrongly, that is what brings fight.” By implication, we must try to listen to each other so as to be able to interpret each other correctly. The Lees gave five profile of poor listener to include:

1. The advice giver: instead of being patient to think they are quick to offer a suggestion. They normally say, “This is what you need to do”⁷¹ without chatting about it. More like ‘Mr. knows it all.’
2. The interrupter: while the person is still speaking, you are already working out what to say in response. Stephen has written that, most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”⁷²
3. The reassure: Nicky and Sila describes this person as one that “... jumps in prematurely, before a sentence is finished...”⁷³
4. The Rationalize: this man rather than listening, he is there already focusing on explaining why we feel as we do.
5. The deflector: this people, instead of commenting on the issue being discussed, they responded on something quite different from the topic, much likely, they talk on what is on their mind.

But a good listener gives full attention, coping with the distractions that may be there, showing an interest in the talk and listening intelligently, and uncritically. We need to acknowledge our partners’ feelings, listen keenly to them as we would ourselves. The Nickys have said “if we are determined to be interested in what

⁷¹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 60.

⁷² Stephen Covey 1999 page 239.

⁷³ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 63.

another person is saying, we listen carefully; otherwise we can easily switch off.”

Every human loves to be listened to, we all need attention of others when we are talking, likewise we should give attention to those who talk to us, especially our spouses.

Love in action: Love is essentially what Paul address in Ephesians 5. In this material, Nicky and Sila lee, in the opening statements of chapter 5, have stated that; “some adults are equally in the dark about the real nature of love. They have been brought up to believe that love is principally an emotion over which we have little control.”⁷⁴ Love is more deliberate, cultivated over a period of time. The Lees in their presentation, made it clear that what the bible has said about it. It is a practical thing; it involves doing, and hugging. It is by this love family can be sustained. The Nickys went ahead to give five practical ways through which men and women can express love to each other.

1. Loving word: Proverbs has shown us that, the tongue is powerful. “It has the power of life and death.”⁷⁵ The truth is, words can affect behavior and ability to extraordinary degree. Like Nicky noted, people can live to the expectation they are given.⁷⁶ This has effect on the way husband and wife speaks to each other. Affirming each other’s instead makes us to feel loved. Let’s pay complements to each other, it draws attention to what we admire

⁷⁴ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 77.

⁷⁵ Proverbs 18:21.

⁷⁶ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 87.

and appreciate in each other. Let's use words in positive ways even in weakness, the person can pick up the challenge and be better tomorrow.

2. Kind actions: We show kindness to our husband or wife when we serve each other in practical ways.⁷⁷ In giving a recommendation on how to treat a nagging wife, Nicky reviling the experience of Dr Iannis, says, "... be nice to her."⁷⁸ Being nice can wave away a lot of problems, makes the trouble maker guilty of his or her actions. Proverbs has recommended that a gentle answer waves away trouble. A happy home consists in finding opportunities to serve each other. The bible says consider others better than you.

3. Quality time: Time together was part of the reason of making a woman out of man for man not be alone but with her. Any short of this, is going away from the purpose of marriage. We did not marry to be loners. Nicky and Sali have said, "if so, the longed for togetherness is more than physical proximity; there is a need, indeed a hunger, for total, focused attention."⁷⁹ Since we are all busy people today because of earns-meat, we must deliberately sit down together after work for at least half an hour⁸⁰ to hear each other's stories of how the day went. The activities we faced especially at work place. Stress and fatigue must be controlled, so whatever you do out there don't forget your partner needs you at home.

⁷⁷ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 93.

⁷⁸ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 94.

⁷⁹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 97.

⁸⁰ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 97.

4. Thoughtful presents: We Africans are not use to giving presents to our wives, more so that we have been told they are less than man and giving the impression as though they are their only for Child birth and sex. With this biblical teaching, we must make effort to start doing what we ought to do. Most of the celebrations of birth days, valentine days, etc., are being learned from the western world by the elite. We need to teach those who are still locally based to get the fun, the joy in appreciating and celebrating events that relate to us. Husband and wife must be in the forefront. The writer of the Marriage Book has writing that “giving presents is fundamental expression of love that transcends all cultural barriers”⁸¹ indeed they symbols with powerful effect of every receiver of gift. A person who is good at giving presents probably loves receiving them.⁸² Learning to give gift is not difficult; it is what we can do. The simples of what we have been looking at about home, let’s get started.

5. Physical affection: These are the teachings Gary Chapman who used the metaphor of language to express a heartfelt commitment to your mate.⁸³ Every human being loves to know that he or she is being loved. Word and actions in love can never be over emphasized. Being shown love through

⁸¹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 98.

⁸² Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 98.

⁸³ Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Communication to Your Mate* (Chicago, IL: Northfield, 1995), 39-119.

touch is a basic need for every person.⁸⁴ Like babies, when they need the mother they cry, and once the mother picks the baby and start touching her around, she feels loved and cared for so she stops crying. Husband and wife physical attention is like that. We need each other. The holding, the hugging, the playing around, etc. If we don't play with ourselves, then who do we play with? Be it naked, be it clothed, there is no difference in marriage, we are one, and it is "my body". The bible tells us in proverbs that the tongue has the power of life and death.⁸⁵ Note, marriage is pleasure with each other, it is happiness, it is "sweet sweet" words, let's learn all it can take to make each other happy. With the mouth we can bless people, with the same mouth, we can curse. The tongue is both good and deathly. Depending on how one uses it, it can be an instrument of happy home and can also be an instrument of hurting and tearing down of the family.

The Alpha Marriage Course material gives us ways we can express love to our partner. They include; paying compliments, offering thanks, being encouraging, being though full, making requests which shows the worth of the person, and showing kindness. This is very vital in our expression of love to our spouses. The time

⁸⁴ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 101.

⁸⁵ Proverbs 18:21.

²⁶⁴ This is a common saying in Nigeria to show that men, no matter how close the area to each other, they will have misunderstanding but that does not mean that they can't live together.

²⁶⁵ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, quoting Paul Tourier, 110.

we spend in the family, we make it qualitative. The two need that time together to achieve the above.

Resolving Conflict: Has there ever been two people living together and they never had any reason to fight or disagree in the history of humanity? I have rather had people say in an adage that “we agree to disagree and we disagree to agree.” This is an indication that whenever two people stay together, they will face issues that will cause sharp disagreement, some mild but that do not make them enemies. Paul Tournie confirms that “disagreements are entirely normal. As a matter of fact, they are a good thing. Those who make a success of their marriage are those who tackle their problems together and who overcome them.”⁸⁶ In this session, Nicky and Sila have made it clear that, we must accept our differences. We all have different backgrounds.

Our background will trigger some things that one may be displeased, but recognizing our differences makes the family to live happily together. “Marriage involves two people with different backgrounds, personalities, desires, views, and priorities being joined together in the most intimate relationship possible for the rest of their lives.”⁸⁷ For all the joy of marriage, we must not do what we want, our desires have been denied us from the day we agreed and accepted to marry each other. We must sacrifice our pleasures and desires for our partners.

⁸⁶ Paul Tournie.

⁸⁷ Tournie.

We all made differently and such differences, makes for conflict which builds or destroy our marriage, but also it makes the whole thing exciting. It adds color, beauty, diversity to the whole of marriage itself. Once we use it to appreciate how different we are peculiarly made, we will bring each other's up in love and unity.

Understanding our personalities can help us know and adjust to each other. Therefore discussing personalities is very vital to our knowing each other in the family to certain extend. Some of the personalities discussed here are:

The extrovert or introvert: the extrovert is more interactive, he likes to talk. Spend time with people, mingle around. This helps them to organize and clarify their thoughts. Solitude is difficult for this people. While quite the opposite, the introvert is quiet, reflective type. Their natural focus is the inner mind, the world of thoughts and ideas. This people need time for themselves and may not have many friends. He may value the extroverts' ease of relating.

Logical and the intuitive: this has to do with the way we view the world around us. Those with a preference for logic use their five senses to gather information. They want facts. They look to the past and learn through experience. They look for clarity and prefer matters of practical importance to conjecture. This people are like details and a critical minded in analyzing facts. On the other hand, those who are intuitive prefer ideas to facts. They

look at the big picture rather than detail. They love to speculate and focus on the future. Others see them as imaginative and unconventional.⁸⁸

The task: oriented and the people oriented: - those who task oriented are clear about their goals. Motivated by; efficiency, justice, and truth. He moves quickly and in an orderly manner. He is organized. People oriented are more like, they relationship with people is more than what you can achieve in boycotting them. Their decisions are connected with their feelings for people. How it will affect them.

Structured or flexible: this has to do with whether we like plans to be drawn up or we want it spontaneous. Those who structure this before doing decide easily but those who keep options open are more flexible. Those of flexibility like freedom and hesitate to finalize and many times can miss the opportunity.

Initiator or supporter: this clearly talks about people who like to follow who liked to be followed. Initiators come up with new ideas, make decision quickly and are not afraid of change. They take charge and may be good leaders. Though there are things to watch out, initiators can fail to consult their partners. Supporter supports but care must be taken; you don't support passively or remain unheard as Nicky puts it.⁸⁹ We must all know who we are and be willing to complement each other as we both make necessary

⁸⁸ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 116.

⁸⁹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 118.

adjustments. In adjustment, we must learn to tolerate each other, finding the best time to talk to each other, being ready to express our views and ready to listen to each other, we must try to avoid accusations, we all have our areas of weakness too, so we must be willing to back down our positions and what we like or hate. Issues must be mutually faced together.

These differences help us to adjust to each other. Nicky said, it helps us appreciate and enjoy each other's uniqueness and must be ready to change to tolerate our partners.⁹⁰ When issues come up, we must negotiate our differences at the best possible time to listen to each other as we express our views, never to avoid conversation. The issue must be faced together and all ready to back down. We must respect each other and allow god to bring that mutual harmony.

The Power of forgiveness: Nicky and Sila begin by quoting Ephesians 4:26 which enjoins us not to allow the sun to go down while you are still angry. The feeling of anger is not wrong it is the way we deal with it that causes damage. "If the hurt and ensuing anger remain, our next instinctive reaction is the desire to get even: hurt for hurt, insult for insult, rejection for rejection,"⁹¹ we normally want the other partner to feel how it hurts. Retaliation is unbiblical. We usually, deliberately look for something to do or say that the other person must feel it. Not right only adds t devastation, and both of the parties suffers the consequences. We must try

⁹⁰ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 118-120.

⁹¹ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 162.

to avoid getting even. Couples should try to go to the heart of the issue and be willing to say sorry and to forgive. Forgiveness sets free.

Love hurts, it makes one vulnerable. What we must do is to get to the heart of the problem to as to be able to maintain loving. Martin Luther the king has been quoted saying, “forgiveness is not just an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.”⁹² That is the attitude of sustaining marriage, without it, marriage can never possibility ever work out the way expected for peace, joy, and harmony.

Whenever there is a problem, we must as quick as possible get to the heart of the problem. Those who like keeping things in mind, harboring them, are going against scriptures and worsen the matter. It will allow for other issues to set in, making it complicated to solve at the end. Nicky and Sila have said “when intimacy has been lost, often we do not look deeply enough for the reasons. We are aware only of the symptoms rather than n the underlying cause.”⁹³ They continue to give recommendation on what to do when unresolved hurts and anger are backlog; 1. Talk about the hurt. 2. Being prepared to say sorry. 3. Choosing to forgive each other.

Parents and In-laws: How to get along with our parents and in-laws has not been easy especially in the African Nigerian set up where a woman is groomed and told from the earliest years that she is for the entire family of the man. The in-laws assume complete control over her, if she meets a calm in-law, she praises God but if

⁹² Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, citing Martin Luther King, 170.

⁹³ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 170.

she meets a domineering, nagging in-law, she may never enjoy her home. Talk more of not being able to give birth; she then must leave the house out of frustration, yet to a ridiculous life outside the family. She endures in pains must of her life time in marriage, until death solve the circumstance or the husband become a radical believer at this point.

Nicky and Sila try to help couples discover that we have to separate from parent's child control relationship which is a gradual process, because we have been with them since our backgrounds. Separating is not easy so the couples need to do it carefully showing appreciation, and try to be in touch so that the gap will not be too sharp to create pains on the parent's side. Consider their needs, remember that you still have the responsibility to appreciate them, meet their needs as they get older. Value also extended family accommodate them were necessary. We are relational being; do not forget this fact, because if you think you don't need them today, you may need them tomorrow. When conflict comes, we can resolve them using same principle as discussed earlier. We have to honor our parents, but also hoping that they will not try to control the couple.

The circle diagram⁹⁴ by Nicky and Sila speaks volume:

- Make a circle of father, mother and child inside it.
- Make circle of father and mother inside it but with a distance, as the child gets matured

⁹⁴ Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 193-195.

- Make circle with only the child inside, father and mother outside, indicating the child is now practicing to take decisions independently. It will give its African problems in this stage.
- The fourth circle will show the marriage life of the new family inside the circle taking their own decisions with all the parents of both outside. It has African problems attached too.

Good sex: Sex in marriage is important. It is the greatest natural intimacy builder. God love sex and deliberately made us the way we are. He invented it. It is a powerful force that makes us one bone one flesh. It is a life time experience and discovery. It is an essential ingredient of the family, and is an act of giving, the most intimate way to show our love for our husbands or wife. Nicky and Sila gives six qualities of sex which includes; communication, tenderness, responsiveness, romance, anticipation, and variety. Husband and wife need to know we are born differently and must work together to bring about happy sex which has the power to bring the family bond to reality.

Affairs outside marriage are dangerous to the family. It hurts and damages the family. Be wise! Instead we need to invest time and energy to build our relationship. Husband and wife must know how to set boundaries fully knowing that infidelity starts from the heart. Couples must talk to each other about their feelings. We must take a firm stand and never give up quickly. We must aim at keeping sex alive by avoiding low self-esteem of our bodies, avoid unresolved emotions, avoid physical problems, tiredness and must adjust and change after child birth.

Marital Counseling for the African Pastor and the Laity: An Introductory Counseling for Pastors, Elders and the Laity

Introduction

In ECWA and Nigeria as a nation, members are faced with so many counseling issues that a pastor who does not have any counseling abilities, will not be able to help members overcome the circumstances they find themselves. The issues that face the Church member's today range from domestic violence, singleness and choice of future partners, death and maltreatment of women, marriage and culture, etc. Therefore, this introductory counseling program is aimed at trying to bridge the gap by enabling pastors have some confidence as they face various issues daily in the cause of the ministry, especially in the area of our concern, 'marriage.'

The introductory counseling plan for Pastors, elders, and the laity will take three meetings of four hours each. Basic training principles of counseling is considered with the aim that this will enable pastors, elders, and the laity engage in life counseling activities in their church with ease.

The first meeting considers pastors counseling basic principles. This emphasizes Biblical basis for the care of members of the Church. Principles of listening and assessing the needs of the person needing it, and actually being able to meet up the needs with no or little stress on both sides and the wisdom behind referrals.

The second meeting considers, the pastor's ability to organize a pre-marital counseling class for members intending to marry. This class helps to inculcate in members what marriage is all about, the influence of culture on Christian marriages,

the lifelong commitment, and other marital issues that constitute cultural problems in Nigeria were considered.

The third aspect of the seminar considers specific issues and problems commonly faced by our people in ECWA and Nigeria as a whole. We tried to develop strategies of intervention, treatment, and solving of the problems. Specific issues touched includes, domestic violence, marriage and conflict management of home, cultural domination in the home/church, sexual intimacy of husband and wife, and few other issues too were considered.

First Session

What Is Counseling?

Asking generally what is counseling. The reaction shows clearly that people know counseling to be “helping the person in problem by advising him on way out”⁹⁵ some said “it is Identifying with those in needs physically, spiritually, and mentally”⁹⁶ some said “it is caring for one another.”⁹⁷ In the writers reaction to what is counseling based on the response of the people, the writer quickly went to the book on the skilled helper by Gerald Egan. He has given us very useful information on helping people get out of their problem or bad situation. He has stated clearly what helping is and its goals. The book also gives clear practical models of helping. He has

⁹⁵ Seminar Audience.

⁹⁶ Seminar Audience.

⁹⁷ Seminar Audience.

said “since helping in such a common human experience, training in both solving one’s own problems and helping others solve theirs should be as common as training in reading, writing, and math.”⁹⁸ Everyone face problems, everyone needs help to get out of the problem. This seems to be the understanding of Egan on counseling.

Garry Collins gives us another profound definition of counseling. He said “counseling is all about change”⁹⁹ there are many people who want to change but do not know how. Many people really need help. One in need of help may not necessarily be able to help himself. They need others to help them like us who have been trained and are leading them.

“It is difficult to lead others to places where one has never been.”¹⁰⁰ Change is actually difficult but it is necessary for our spiritual growth as we strive to change from bad hurting situations to happy good environment that matures us in Christ. Crabb¹⁰¹ has said that to be more like Christ in the centre of our problems.

One can never truly be happy outside Christ; though having Christ gives eternal happiness our response to counseling also must be to point people seek first this kingdom of God. In another way, Crabb is saying that the goals of biblical

⁹⁸ Gerard Egan, *Post Modern Times: A Christian Task to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 3.

⁹⁹ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed (Dallas, TX: Nelson, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003).

¹⁰¹ Lawrence J. Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977).

counseling is “...maturity”¹⁰² which has to do with obedience and character growth of every believer.

The church, the pastor, the leader in the church and elsewhere has a great task, to help people get out of their problems, to help bring about change, make them focus on Christ as we mature them to be obedient, as we help them build character.

What Counseling Can Do

Counseling has as its goal to provide encouragement and guidance, to those “facing losses, decisions or disappointments. It stimulates personality growths and development. It helps people cope more effectively with the problems of living with inner conflict, and with crippling emotional”¹⁰³ it is capable of assessing individuals, family members, married couples, etc to resolve interpersonal tensions.

Basic Principles of Pastoral Counseling

Collins has said, “that is a more specialized part of pastoral care that involves helping individuals, families, or groups as they care with the pressures and crises of life”¹⁰⁴ usually it is the trained pastors or members in theological education that seems to be responsible for pastoral counseling. The pastoral ultimate goal must be

¹⁰²Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 22.

¹⁰³ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 36.

“to help counselees experience healing, learn coping and relational skills, and grow both personally and spiritually.”¹⁰⁵

A Biblical Basis of Care of Members of the Local Church

The Bible teaches that every believer must bear his brother’s burden”¹⁰⁶

Pastoral counseling should be a sensitive and caring Christians. All believers are responsible for the caring of those in need of it. It is not a business of pastors and leaders alone but the entire flock, the church members and leaders, many make classification of pastoral care, pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy. But the broadest of all is pastoral care which embraces other two types. Therefore, making a reference to the churches overall responsibilities of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling people to God and one to another. This idea of care includes preaching and feeding, shepherding God’s people, nurturing, caring in times of need, disciple and administering the sacrament.

The church has been vested with the responsibility of caring for the church (members) which is not limited to the ordained pastors. It is the work of every believer. In Nigerian church, we have grown to believe that only the trained ordained pastor can counsel. Members of the congregation believes it so much that a fellow members efforts are despise. Members prefer to hear and quote what the pastors say either publicly in preaching and teaching or privately during counseling or

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 36.

¹⁰⁶ Galatians 6:2.

discussion. One use to think so too. “I don’t think this way anymore”. The church is a community of believers who must carry each other’s burdens. Care for one another. It is a spiritual journey where joining with others to worship, to learn, to grow, to serve, to give etc using our various gifts of the Holy spirit, natural gifts and talents to build each other towards the new kingdom where all these misshapes will be no more. Where human wickedness will be taking away.

Collin had said, “no church is perfect, and none of us fully reaches our ideas, but ideally, church communities are safe environments where can struggle, grow, care, share, and learn how to be like Jesus”¹⁰⁷ every Christian has the responsibility to help and counsel others. As stated in Romans 12, I Corinthian 12, and Ephesians 4, the gifts are given to be used by the Holy Spirit. Some are gifted teachers, some Pastors, evangelists, administrator, some gifted as people – helpers or counselors.

In verse 8 of Romans 12, exhortation, the Greek word *paraklesis*, which means “coming alongside to help” implies admonishing, confronting, supporting and encouraging people to face the future. All these sound to be counseling abilities giving to believers for believers and people. The writer do not wish to say only those having the gifts do counsel, but just as every believer is responsible to preach to others (witness), but some are specially given the gift of evangelism, so is with issue of counseling or helping others.

¹⁰⁷ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 35.

Behind every believer the goal of biblical counseling, must be to promote Christian maturity. Make people enjoy their worship of God and have effective life of service to God and humanity in the church, the Family and on the street.

Listening and Accessing the Needs of the Person Needing It

It is necessary to look at what people need to know about people in order to effectively counsel them. In this case, like Collins has enumerated, the counselor has to answer the following questions; 1. What is the real problem? 2. Should I try to help? 3. What could I do to help? 4. Would someone else be better qualified to help? Having answered this questions then the counselor is ready to listen and access the need of the counselee.

The counselor and attending: For the pastor or counselor to get the counselee's problems, he has to give total attention. This could be done through one's eye contact, which will assure concern and understanding, ones posture that will increase communication flows.

Listening to the counselees: this is a difficult task, an active process which involves trying to get what is left out from counselee's expression, waiting patiently through periods of silence, using eyes and ears to collect information. One must be able to set his conflicts, biases and preoccupations so one can concentrate in hearing the one in need of help. One must be careful to only make occasional specific comments that will help counselee continue talking and clearing the air for you to understand.

A search for clues is vital to listening and accessing the needs. The counselor is responsible both verbally and nonverbally to listen and show understanding of the

counselee's talk. Interpreting the counselee won't help, but one is encouraged to take notes of bits recognized as meaningful to understanding the situation.

Proffering solution can be based on those clues discovered. Kollar has given more light by answering the question "so, what are the bits of information that I am jotting down? As you may have suspected, I am looking for any evidence of exceptions, i.e. times we the problem was not happening that the counselee has not recognized as meaningful, as straight, i.e. personal, family, or social strengths that the counselee has made use of in the past but in not using now"¹⁰⁸.

Listening seems to be a simple word to group and easy to do. Egan has said "...it is amazing how often people fail to listen to one another"¹⁰⁹. He said "full listening means listening actively, listening accurately, and listening for meaning. Listening is not merely a skill. It is a rich metaphor for the helping relationship- indeed and relationships"¹¹⁰

Do not forget, counselees talk about their experiences that are what happens to them. They talk about their affairs, that is, their feelings, emotions and moods that came up and comments to their experiences in both internal and external behavior.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Allen Kollar, *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling: An Effective Short-Term Approach for Getting People Back on Track* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 118.

¹⁰⁹ Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper: A Problem Management and Opportunity-Development Approach to Helping*, 7th ed (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2002), 75.

¹¹⁰ Egan, *Skilled Helper*, 75.

We must try to recognize key feelings, emotions, and moods. Egan¹¹¹ gave us three reasons to do so: (1) they pervade our lives, (2) they greatly affect the quality of our lives, and (3) feelings, emotions, and moods are drivers of our behavior.

Counselee must be understood before any problem can be clearly viewed and solutions proffered based on the true picture of things.

The Ability to Meet Up the Needs with No or Less Stress

As a pastor, counselor, the elder and Christians, generally, our desire is to help people get out of their problems. Change people's lives for good, let them enjoy this life than living in perpetual suffering with problems that can be overcome, with enormous activities and demand of the day, the earlier or shorter time a counselor takes to give solution to a problem the better for both of how best we can reduce the time consumed in counseling and get achieving maximum result of helping.

As we counsel, there are fundamental questions that we have to ask and the answer to those questions guides and enhances our counseling proficiency and efficiency. Questions like why do people come to us for counseling? What is it that they wish to get or accomplish? As a counselor, what are your goals for helping to counsel people? Depending on an individual's answer to the above questions, it makes counseling much easier. Once you have focus, it is choosing for success because things become more interesting and easy as you remain focused.

¹¹¹ Egan, *Skilled Helper*, 80.

Vague notions of either the counselee or counselor, makes the whole process of counseling aim less and ineffective. Setting of goals therefore, makes counseling meaningful. Some of the goals one can counsel include¹¹²

1. Symptoms Relief. Clients that approach the counselor, pastor, etc. know something is wrong with the issues. They may be in despair, anxiety, inner turmoil, debilitating insecurity, personal conflicts, or other tension making them confused and miserable. Pastors, counselors, help by listening and showing compassion. He makes some suggestions to reduce the stress and give hope, and then the real problem can be faced squarely.
2. Self-Understanding. The goal to understand self is a big step to healing. Many problems are created by self. The counselee may have biased perspectives, harmful attitudes or self destructive ways of behaving. The counselor must as his goal try to help the counselee get the true picture of himself and the world surrounding him.
3. We must make one of our goals to be behavioral change. Most of our behavior is learned. So we are responsible to help the counselee unlearn ineffective behavior and learn more effective ways of doing things.
4. Many come because of conflicting issues with others. We have to develop our goal to help build better marriages, better parents, child relationship, smooth employer employee rapport, and other conflicting issues between humans to bring reconciliation.

¹¹² Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 64.

5. Self Development. Some come to be more fulfill and their lives better-able to reach their goals. We have to help people able to meet their goals, solve their problems, and work effectively, except for temporary period of unusual steps or crops.

With the goal set, counseling becomes meaningful and achievable for both the counselee and counselor. Change, needs are met. They become better.

Mistakes We Pastors and Counselors Can Make

Many times we pastors have made mistakes and prolong problems or not solve them at all; even some counselors do same .Those mistakes includes the following as given by Collins.¹¹³

When a counselor or pastor visits instead of counseling. Visit is mutual sharing but counseling is a problem centered, goal directed conversation that focuses on the needs of the person. Visits should not be primary or prolong.

Starting to solve problem too early. Goal directed can be tempted to start counseling immediately, that is what counselees want, immediate relief. Don't be tempted. Listen first carefully; clarify issues, as reflect what counselee is saying before your counsel.

Don't solve as an interrogator. When you ask so many questions and too quickly, counselees can misunderstand you. Better to ask fewer questions of understanding and help counselee to talk. Allow time for silence.

¹¹³ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 23.

Being disrespectful and judgmental. Don't be quick to categorize people.

Nobody likes to be categorized and be made the object of prejudice.

Don't be over involved emotionally. There has to be a line between caring and becoming too involved. Too much emotional involved can make you lose objectivity and it reduces effectiveness.

Being distant and artificial. Some counselors feel things must be done in that instant way, using appropriate word, avoid mistakes, or demonstrate that they have knowledge and skills to handle any situation. Often such pastors and counselors do not admit their own weakness. Not right.

Finally, a Counselor can be defensive-not proper. Sometimes Counselors feel threatened. The ability to listen is hindered when we feel being criticized unfairly, aware that we aren't helping, bothered by guilt, or afraid of being harmed by a counselee. If you feel like the above mentioned, ask yourself why and may discuss them with your fellow colleague. The more we understand ourselves and accept who we are, the less likely to be threatened by any counselee.

Once we are able to set achievable goals, and avoid common counseling mistakes, what a wonderful time of counseling that is fruitful and brief that we will have. This then leads us to strategic pastoral counseling. A short time model that can help both counselor and counselee use their time, though short but with great achievements.

Short Term Counseling Model

As discussed earlier, the "...understanding of the goals of counseling is one of the most important aspects of counseling relationship"¹¹⁴. With goals very clear in mind. Counseling can become as short as possible. Benner¹¹⁵ gives us short stages of short term counseling. He included; encounter, engagement, and disengagement.

Encounter: This stage has to do with the initial contact of the counselee with the counselor. Here, personal contacts are established, boundaries set, acquaintance with the counselee and his concerns, diagnosing developing of mutual acceptable focus for the counseling they will help together are done.

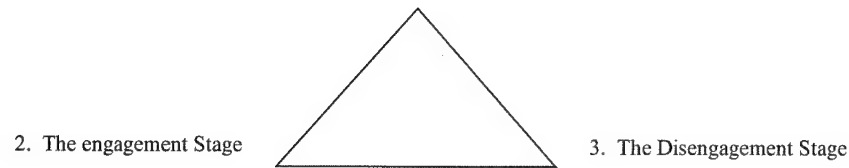
Engagement: Here is where counselor and counselee get down to the Lord's business of counseling. This can take about three sessions. Hearing, feelings, thoughts, behavioral patterns as it comments problem area, development of new perspectives and strategies for coping and change are treated.

Disengagement: This takes one or two sessions. This meeting is important because it takes care of evaluation of progress and assessment of remaining concerns. This section may lead to the next discussion, referral for further help needed. Here counseling is terminated. This table of the stages and tasks of strategize counseling might help. Encounter Stage 1: Where meeting and ...boundaries are set. Looking at central concern and history as it affects the concern.

¹¹⁴ Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 73.

1. Diagnose the problem and then set focus



At number two above one analysis the effective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of the problem and looking of the resources for coping or change.

At number three above one evaluate progress and assessing remaining concern. Here you can make referral if needed and the counseling is terminated.

Wisdom behind Referrals: Pastors, counselors, and any other person that desires to help another person get out of problem, must be willing and ready to refer their counselees to other professionals that may better meet these needs of the counselee. One must be knowledgably about when and to whom a counselee should be referred. The guideline includes:¹¹⁶

Know the variety of professionals around that you might refer. One must know the person's reputation, training, experience, and professional supervision, network of other professional or hospital to call on, and faith commitment. The pastor or counselor has the responsibility to appropriately present the referral to the client. The why of referral must be explained carefully and clearly. One must state his limitations of time and training and the qualification of the pastoral to be referred to.

¹¹⁶ Randolph K. Sanders, ed., *Christian Counseling Ethics: A Handbook for Therapists, pastors, and Counselors* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 80.

Figure 3.1.

A Short Time Model Counseling Style

At Stage 1. The Counselor and Counselee meets. Encounter period.

- A. Establish Contact.**
- B. Set Boundaries.**
- C. Get Acquainted and get his or her concerns.**
- D. Diagnose and Develop acceptable focus of Counseling.**

At Stage 2. The Counselor and Counselee engages themselves.

- A. Get down to the business of Counseling.**
 - Section 1. Hear the counselee, feel him, and Give it a Thought.**
- B. Attend to Behaviors patterns as they connect problem areas**
- C. Give new Perspective of Life.**
- D. Develop Strategies for coping with change**

At Stage 3. Is time to Disengage the Counselee.

- A. It is time to Evaluate the Counseling process, progress and assessment of remaining concerns.**
- B. Referral for further help if needed.**
- C. The Counseling is Terminated**

Explanation must be given on how to get in touch with the person referred to and possibly to reveal some of the things to be expected during the sessions. In some cases calls can be made to set the first contact or appointment.

Care must be taken to reassure the counselee on their relationship together. Let him not feel you are rejecting him. As a pastor, you pray with him.

Make sure you maintain that relationship. Maintain contact, which could be either through calls, notes or knits.

It is also appropriate to keep contact with the professional to whom the counselee has been referred to. They may need information prior to first visit. Be in contact.

We must own up for our weakness and refer our members, clients to others that might best help the situation.

Second Session

The second section looks at the pastor's ability, to organize premarital counseling. In Nigeria especially, we are faced with multiple problems arising from cultural backgrounds and beliefs that affects our homes. Christianity seems not to have been able to erase the culture from the minds of our people, may be because pastors and Christian leaders have failed or people are just adamant and stubborn to God's ways of life. For an example, after marriage, a woman is seen to be married to the entire family of the man, where even his brothers are seen to have authority over the woman. By culture, the woman is like a slave to the family of the man especially that they have paid for her through dowry. These and many cultural issues has caused many families to live in pain and disbelieved the Scripture. The trend our

counseling among many people, pastors and counselor so called in Nigeria is more a casual thing which is even done mostly based on cultural setting even if it offends the Bible. Evangelical church pastors must bridge the gap-created against the Biblical worldview of marriage and home. Our youths must be given Biblical pre-marital counseling before they get involved in marriage life. We have seen divorce on the increase, such needs to be prevented.

Pastor's Ability to Organize Pre-Marital Counseling

For the pastors among ECWA, especially in Tasha Local Church Council to be able to organized and manage pre-marital counseling in their church and society. The program was organized to equip the pastors with what to do. Since I have discussed that, pre-marital counseling has been down played. The pastors need to have the ability to serve as a preventive agent of problems that may arise after marriage. Education and information cannot be over-emphasizing in the life of every existence.

It has been discovered that many who believe they know about marriage already and refuse to be guided, end up running to pastors, leaders, friends, families etc for help or advice as marital difficulties start to surface. Therefore, pastors, churches, must insist on premarital counseling before marriage is performed in the church especially.

The pastor therefore, must deliberately organize a program of pre-marital counseling in the church that people intending to marry must submit to. A marital counseling section that covers most of the marital issues and problems as will be highlighted later. The pastor must also be able to separate between what is African

culture not conforming to Bible, and purely Bible culture of marriage. As new creature or creation in Christ, the old has pass away, behold the new has come. Our marital life must adhere to scriptures; else problems will continue to be on the increase in our African society.

The pastor needs to note the importance of this counseling. Collins¹¹⁷ has written that it “can slow couples down to spend more time in deliberations, send the message that marriage matters, teaches couples where they can go for help and can provide certain kinds of training, including relationship enhancement or communication skills that can lower the risks for later marital distress or divorce. Pastors and counselors need to help couples deal with those expectations they have when they go into marriage. Such unrealistic expectation can lead to fights, anger, and termination of marriage.

In our influence of culture or marriages we have to guard against early marriages. Our cultural settings, especially in some areas in Nigeria, people marry when they are young. Not mature yet mentally, physically, spiritually and otherwise. As Collins has observed “Personal immaturity that can leader to insensitivity”¹¹⁸, “immature people tend to be self centered”¹¹⁹. People need to know that they are mature to think of marriage. They must be responsible. In some religious cultural settings like Islam, children between 9 to 17 years, considered to be under aged, are

¹¹⁷ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 525.

¹¹⁸ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 526.

¹¹⁹ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 526.

culturally bond to marry at such age, this amount to child abuse and ridiculous behavior such must be dealt with. It must not influence or be practice in the Church.

Our culture has changed the roles of the husband and wife that have been passing on from generation to generation. It is believed for example, that as far as you are a man, every woman is under you to control, even your mother. This has caused injury to many families in Africa.

In most of our families, the man only goes to farm come back, takes bath, eat and relax that is all. But the woman, wakes up early, cleans the house, prepare breakfast, boils water for the husband and children to bath, baths the children and dress them, goes to farm to plant and bring fire woods, prepare lunch, start preparing for evening food, welcomes the husband from work with water to drink and bathing water, present evening meal, clean dishes before bed, prepares the bed, baths the children prepare them for sleep, etc. she is first to wake up and last to sleep. And in the night she must submit to the husband's desire for sex no matter what. What slavery. In fact, when the crops are done, she is responsible to bring them home. What a mess to the church. We must correct this ugly behavior which is still practice by many Christians. Many cannot disengage completely.

A woman is seen to be married to the entire husband's people. She lives in force to respect all of them. They can send her, abuse her and the husband just looks and get relief that she is obedient to his people. I case of the husband's death, the family will park all their belongings and send the wife away with nothing, in fact collect all the Children, that a woman doesn't have children only the man. What a shame. The church must change that. Pre-marital counseling can help.

Women decision in our culture is second class if not third class, her say means nothing, the man over rules and she must obey. That must stop. Culture puts it that a woman can never desire or request for sex and in fact, many see sex as only for children. This has created pains and unhappiness in the home of many. The joy of marriage is not experienced, and when frustration reaches its highest level, some women cannot endure any more. Once that happens, the problem becomes so serious.

The scripture must be our standard. It must guide our culture both African and abroad. Pastors, counselors must wake up to the task. This brings us to look at the next focus.

What Marriage Is All About?

The Bible is vivid about marriage. Genesis says “for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become one flesh”.¹²⁰ From the biblical teachings, the man is the one that is asked to leave, be united and become one flesh with the wife. In our culture, it has been changed that it is the women that leaves. By implication of Biblical teaches, both of them are to be separated mentally, influentially etc and be one with each other. They become one separate entity. No longer dependent on their families but a different home with absolute authority to organize their home for their good, their happiness.

¹²⁰ Genesis 2.

In marriage there is a leaving, a cleaving, and a becoming one flesh. The responsibility of man loving and woman respecting does not put the other above. They are both equally yoked together and therefore must honor and respect each other.

Long Life Commitment

Marriage is a long time commitment. Some people today especially in our Nigerian context marry for several reasons. Some because they have to marry, some because their mates have got married since and have children leaving them behind. Some because their parents want them to and to have grand children before they die. Others because they can't afford to remain lonely, they want to avoid fornication and to be responsible. Yet others, because they want to take advantage of the other partner, the list can continue but these are the major.

The reason or reasons for marriage today has also given room for culture, society, the world to abuse the biblical principles of marriage in our time. No wonder the growth and "legalization" of divorce today. Once the reason of marriage is not met, divorce becomes the solution.

Marriage is a lifelong commitment. From the Bible it is clear that "...whatever God has join together, so let not man put asunder"¹²¹ having achieved oneness right

¹²¹ Mark 10:5-9.

from Genesis¹²². Marriage is intended to last till one of the couple dies¹²³. It is a permanent commitment¹²⁴. You must not look for excuse to leave your partner¹²⁵.

Divorce is in no way intended by God. Marriage must last as long as one exists here on earth according to Romans.¹²⁶ If you choose divorce, can you stay without any marriage or sexual desires? Christ made it clear that divorce happened and was allowed in old testaments time because of the “hardness of the people’s heart”¹²⁷ but in the beginning God made them male and female and no one should separate it.

Pastors, counselor in pre-marital counseling must bring this realization to the couples before marriage. They must know that marriage was not instituted by culture, government, but God alone, the maker and who sustains all things. Marriage must not follow the tone of self-centeredness; it must be sacrificial to fulfill obedience to God’s institution.

Our Nigerian society needs to know that marriage is not just for any other reason but to fulfill glorifying God in it. Therefore, our youth must be taught choosing a life mate Biblically, and wisely, Collins have raised very vital question “do we have biblical godliness for choosing a mate today?”¹²⁸ One can only lay his hands

¹²² Genesis 2:18-24.

¹²³ Romance 7:1-3.

¹²⁴ Matthew 19:7-8; Luke 16:18.

¹²⁵ Matthew 5:32.

¹²⁶ Romans 7:1-3.

¹²⁷ Mark 10:5-9.

¹²⁸ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 507.

on the passage of scripture that advise the unmarried never to choose a mate that is an unbeliever, how can light co-exist with darkness?¹²⁹ “The marriage must be acceptable to God”¹³⁰.

As a pastor counsels, mate selection must be taken seriously. Like Collins expressed some points¹³¹, couples should be taught spiritual evaluation. Some of the question to be answered includes, is my mate a believer? How do i know? Does his or her life show evidence of fruits of the Holy Spirit? Especially in Galatians 5:22-23? Have you been praying together? How you agree of the church? Standard of living, hope for life-style, view of right and wrong? And your perspective about what a Christian home is?

One must be taught how to “Evaluate motives, ideas, and maturity¹³²”. Any relationship that is not going to lead to happy marriage life should be helped to separate before marriage. Though difficult but has to be faced and achieved, preventing poor mate selection, very important. Once a proper mate is gotten, problems will be less and God will be glorified.

¹²⁹ 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

¹³⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:39.

¹³¹ Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 514.

¹³² Collins, *Christian Counselor*, 515.

Marital Problems Born Out Of Culture

“Prevention is better than cure”¹³³ Can there be a home that is devoid of problems? In as much this is difficult to achieve absolute peace in our homes; they can radically and drastically reduce to almost zero level. There are problems that can be understood and managed properly. Good marriage starts long before the ceremony. In this case especially in our African culture, some specific cultural problems have to be iron out.

The issue of parent’s interference. Most African parents still believe they have authority over their children even after marriage. They must be taught that Christian marriage shows that they are now a family of their own devoid of parental control. Pastors must be helpful to better model a healthy relationship.

African marriage and children. The Bible is clear that children come from God; they are a reward from God. It is sad that many Africans, even believers, do not understand this when it comes to issue of childlessness. Many families have been separated, many result into marrying many wives, the in-laws will always complain and many times, cause the woman pain in her husband’s house. They believe she must give birth or leave the house. This is a serious problem in Africa and especially in Nigeria. Pastors and counselors must wake up and resolve this problem that is a “cancer worm”¹³⁴ in the church. There has to be clear understanding that marriage was not primarily for child birth.

¹³³ A popular saying.

¹³⁴ Popular saying in Nigeria indicating something that is there causing problem gradually and deeply.

Sex. Many Nigerian families have suffered the believe that, sex is only when one is looking for a child. Once the woman is pregnant, no more sex until after several years when the child is grown and you are looking for another child. Mothers believe that any sex during pregnancy and breast feeding affects the child. In spite of the family planning going own, some people still hold to this background, and this has caused serious injury to many husbands. The church must intensify the biblical teaching and counseling to help mothers know that, this belief is purely African tradition not scientific or Biblical. This has separated and caused pains to many families.

High payment of dowry. African believes that you have to pay money or equivalent of it for anybody you want to marry. In some areas it is so high in some areas where the families are educated it is reduce to a considerable amount. To some, the man has to build houses for the father and mother of the lady and equally pay a big sum of money. This had affected many homes. Women are seen as purchased properties. The African Pastors and Counselors must come up to help the situation. Families become frustrated because the husband feels, he has authority absolutely over the purchased wife, while the wife believes she is a free been too based on biblical understanding and human reason.

Third Session

Issues or topics and problems commonly encountered by our people. The session begins with a look at important issues discussed earlier. In our review, we

looked at the presentation of Crabb¹³⁵ who answers the question why counseling? Is it on finding happiness? It must be, to be more like Christ in the centre of our problems. One can never be happy outside Christ therefore our response to circumstances in counseling must be biblical. Seeking first God's kingdom and everything will be added to us¹³⁶. Paul had said his desire was to please Christ even if he must be unhappy¹³⁷. It is our responsibility to help our members exhort each other freeing ourselves to worship and serve God by helping each other become more like Christ.

We have to help people attain maturity level that makes them overcome any situation that confronts them. In this case there has to be immediate obedience in each specific situation that comes our way. That also produces long-term character growth. We must aim at developing attitudes, beliefs, and purpose in people. Counseling could be said to be human development. To know the needs of the people, their feelings, the way they think, and their behavior.

Treatment and Solution to Problems

We must try to know the root cause of the problem and how to create a solution. Kollar¹³⁸ has given a tip in his book. He asked what is the root cause of the problem, how do we create solutions? His book tells us several things to note. That

¹³⁵ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*.

¹³⁶ Matthew 6:33.

¹³⁷ Hebrew 13:15,16.

¹³⁸ Kollar, *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling*.

God has given us the ability to create solutions. They can be presented and clarified. One by one outcome to counseling can be watched. The counselor and counselee can do the creating and clarifying together. We create solution as a joint effort with God in the centre. This process can be taught.

The above mentioned, according to Crabb¹³⁹, helps the counselor finds out what the counselee wants, look at what God has already done in the counselee's life that is working and then encourage him to go ahead with that and equally asking him to do something different.

Few issues were pointed out for deliberation that included: Domestic violence, marriage and conflict management at home, cultural domination in the home and church, and sexual intimacy of husband and wife. At final slap, we discussed other issues faced by most of us in the church and society.

Domestic Violence

What is domestic violence we may ask; it is the wicked mistreatment of the less privileged. Berley says "domestic violence and abuse can be physical, as in wife or child beating"¹⁴⁰ this beating can extend to elderly once. We have also sexual abuse, spiritual abuse that exploits people etc. It is an abnormal treatment of those you over power, in another word, those you should protect.

¹³⁹ Kollar, *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling*.

¹⁴⁰ James D. Berley, *Called into Crisis: The Nine Greatest Challenges to Pastoral Care* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 79.

Child Abuse

Many children in the African continent have been abused severally. Many have been beaten without cause because of minor usual child behavior. In some instances, is because of lack of knowledge on child development and care. Sometimes because of poverty, children are forced to do hard labor. Many children in Africa roam around begging because that is the only way the family can survive. Yet this situation amounts to child abuse.

Those who have house helps (girls hired to work at home) usually are being over used. They sleep late and wake up early. They work more than their strength could bear. Where they fail, indeed it would be beating. We agree that our country needs to enact a law to protect the child like the western world; this could reduce this common behavior of child abuse.

Child abuse: it was paramount that cases of sexually abuse children are on the increase in our society by the adults, especially the elderly once. The church must take measures to educate its members on the evil behind this.

Every Nigerian person must be on the look out to protect these female children. The police must be intimated immediately traces of such behavior are discovered. Parents must be encouraged not to allow their female children go around hawking and selling in spite of the poverty situation. Our children are endangered by that.

Wife Abuse

In our Nigerian situation, this particular abuse becomes more because the man and his family believes she has been purchased and therefore a servant of the

family. Men treats her as a slave servant, the brothers, mother and father, sees her as one that must do everything for them without authority of her own. Any deviation warrants beaten from the man, and even from the husband brothers. The situation many times is so ugly to describe. The unfortunate thing is, even some Christians in the church are victims of this behavior.

There has to be a preventive measure to save the church from ridicule. We can't behave like the society; we must rather influence it for change of behavior. Church pastors, elders have a task, we are agents of change, leading people to behave like Christ, leading and guiding people to do what is right in the sight of people of God.

We must also inform the authority immediately of such behavior when discovered and especially when the man is adamant to change. Though with corrupt leaders, such reports in our country does little help, since money seems to be the ruling force. We are living in a dangerous time. The church must intensify its effort to mature church members who will salt and be the light of the world.¹⁴¹

Elder Abuse

This type of abuse is gradually coming up strongly in our society today. Before, in Nigeria such things are not heard because of our orientation of obedience to the elders. This culture of the elderly has brought respect in our society. Unfortunately, that is being affected as unemployment has made youths of our day

¹⁴¹ Matthew 6:11-12.

to indulge into many unholy activities of drugs, robbery etc. such has lead to a child abusing his father and mother and even taken life in some cases.

This is very sad. The counselors, pastors must find away to advise our youths to be self dependent, to do something for a living, not to hang around with friend doing nothing and yet waiting for food to come.

Spiritual Abuse

This is where, we Pastors, coarse people, exploit them in steal of building their spiritually, we take advantage of them to get what we want. The behavior leaders, pastors, exhibit includes taking sexual advantage of some flocks, excessive demand of members allegiance, time, money, devotion, and rigidly prescribed behavior which amounts to slavery.

In Nigerian where there is proliferation of churches on almost daily basis, claims, demands etc. are justified by theological arguments and our people are not patient and ready to consider the bible themselves. They love promises and declarations of better life, whether that works or not seems not to be a problem. People are being deceived and those who object to the claims are ridiculed, condemned, ejected from the church and community of fellow friends and believers.

Spiritually abused may not be harmed physically but they are psychologically. "...they feel confused, used, afraid, disillusioned with spiritual authorities, even

unable to trust in God.”¹⁴² We must go out to help these people oppressed in various ways through teaching, pastoral care, and counseling.

Marriage and Conflict Management

Many issues that affect marriage and home have been discussed earlier. Yet this issue of conflict is important to be addressed. Indeed, we cannot avoid it but we have to control or manage it for a happy family to be realized. Home is a place where joy and pains are both experienced. We must have a way to allow joy to be the paramount experience of the home. Berley in his book, *called into crisis*¹⁴³ has given us what to do in controlling crisis.

Controlled release of tension: When a couple has built pressure in their relationship or a period, when they reach a crisis it can be destructive. Give them the opportunity to be heard, it releases tension and pressure.

Increased understanding of issues: since couples come in with different backgrounds and world views, they must be helped to view their problems in new perspective. Communication with, rather than at, each other: The priority must be to get the couples talking to each other. Communication bridges many gaps, avoids misunderstanding. It helps to cement relationships.

¹⁴² Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 401.

¹⁴³ Berley, *Called into Crisis*, 48-50.

Refusing on one's own Responsibilities: Couples must understand their responsibilities and areas of weakness in meeting up and the willingness to encourage the other and help him or her improve.

Appreciation for the other feelings: The couples must learn to appreciate each other. We don't have to agree in everything, but we must appreciate and value each other's efforts, value each other's feelings. It brings about understanding.

Cultural Domination in the Home/Church

It is disturbing, as noticed earlier, that culture is actually controlling many families in Africa. Homes and some church actions are based on the culture of the locality not the Bible. We have to get started by coming out boldly to correct that culture that is not in line with the Bible. The leadership of the church has to take specific decision on some marital issues like, dowry payments that now turn women to being properties, issues of marrying, because the parents want upspring.

Culture must not dominate the church, the church must dominate culture. Cultural issues must be confronted head long and seriously.

Sexual Intimacy of Husband and Wife

As shared earlier, some people today still believe that sex is only for child birth. This has caused many pains to men. It has led many men to marry more than one wife, some get concubines outside marriage, have girl friends etc. who, if they succeed in winning the husband, problems become worse at home.

There has to be sexual freedom of home. In Africa, we don't believe a woman can request for sex. We have to liberate our people from this bondage. Once you are married sex is for you, any time except otherwise stated as in first Corinthians 7:1-5.

Sex as Source to Bring Conversation, Peace and Love into Conjugal Relations

In liberating our people from lack of freedom in sexual intimacy that affects the female more and hinders proper communication and pleasure that the family needs to have, The Book, 'The Joy of Being a Woman and What a Man Can Do' by Ingrid Trobisch gives us information about fertility, child conception and mutual pleasure between husband and wife as a way to bring conversation, peace and love into conjugal relations. In this section, reflecting on this lessons will liberate those who are still in the dark about sexual activities of husband and wife thereby robbing themselves of the joy and pleasure of God's creation of marriage.

Fertility

Every woman has ups and downs in every month of her existence, which is due to the fact of changes that occurs in her fertility circles. Her emotions based on hormonal changes needs to be understood by each family for mutual fellowship to take effect. Like Ingrid puts it, a husband asking, "Why is my wife never the same two days in a row?"¹⁴⁴ Knowing once wife circle, changes in a month brings harmony in the home. Menstruation period is experienced by every woman, but it is not time

¹⁴⁴ Ingrid Trobisch, *The Joy of Being a Woman: What Can Man Do* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1975), 36.

of conception as believed by some people. The ovulation is the time a woman can conceive when she meets a man. Knowing the process of ovulation is key to fertility. The question therefore is what happens in a woman's circle? Many Africans have suffered mostly after the birth of a child, it will take until the child is weaned in 2, 3, years before they can have sex again. What a frustrating condition of both parties especially the man who sees the woman as a sex machine.

When the pituitary gland, the ovaries have released their hormones, they develop a girl into a woman, she is now ready for the monthly circle. The ovaries are located in both sides of the uterus linked by the fallopian tube to the womb. The ovaries are filled with tiny eggs which are more than 100,000 of them. One of them get ripe each month and ready to receive a sperm, Ingrid has said, "If the ovum is not met by a sperm during its journey through the fallopian tube, then the menstrual period will take place."¹⁴⁵ Which is just a "... tears of disappointed uterus"¹⁴⁶ and a new circle begins again except conception takes place by the receiving of a sperm, the circle continuous every month until menopause sets in.

Ingrid made explanations about estrogen which she called the hormone of "femininity," it is more active during the early stage of the circle and reaches the climax at the time of the ovulation. The progesterone which she called the "maternity" hormone, is more active during the second cycle. This progesterone helps prepare the lining of the uterus to receive a fertilized ovum. This makes a

¹⁴⁵ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 38.

¹⁴⁶ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 38.

woman's temperature higher after ovulation than before it. The progesterone also accounts for the breast to make milk, so they are larger and tender in latter day's cycle. A woman weighs higher because of retaining of more fluid in her body. She is affected physically and psychologically. She becomes easily upset, etc. at the start of new cycle, the femininity hormone resumes so she becomes normal again. She rise to very occasion becoming more optimistic. Ingrid has written that "to accept yourself as a woman means to live consciously with your cycle: live with it and not against it."¹⁴⁷ This calls for understanding of the cycle by the husband noting the various changes that occur and the physical and the psychological reactions of the two cycles. Such communication of both partners brings understanding, support of each other and harmonious living that bears with each other. The lack of this knowledge of women's monthly cycle has created serious issues in some families and has resulted in divorce in some cases.

Fear of unwanted pregnancy can diminish sexual joy, like in the African society who suffer "no sex" until when another child is needed. It has always been a struggle in the family of those who do not understand the safe periods and danger periods. There is the need to erase this fear of unwanted pregnancy in marital conjugal pleasure. Both the man and woman needs to understand this fertility period. The question would be, can a woman know her ovulation time? Ingrid has helped us to know that there are certain signs that indicates the woman is ovulating. She said, "Ovulation usually occurs just before the rise of temperature. The higher

¹⁴⁷ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 40.

temperature level indicates that progesterone, the maternity hormone, now has the upper hand. Another indication that ovulation is taking place is the greater amount of cervical mucus.”¹⁴⁸ But Ingrid suggested another method which she preferably called “Symto-thermal”. It says that at ovulation, physical symptoms can be observed and after the ovulation the basal body temperature rises. Conception is only possible when mucus like fluid is produced by the cervix.

Ovulation can be recognized by five symptoms; 1. There is a wetness at the mouth of the vagina when the ovulation approaches. It is more profuse, clearer, and transparent and slippery discharge. 2. There is also a sharp pain in the lower abdomen of the woman. Ingrid calls it “mittelschmerz, or midpain.” Caused by the congestion of the ovary as it is ready to ovulate. 3. There is the pinkish blood or spotting at the mouth of the vagina. 4. A day before ovulation, there is the feeling of prinking, tingling sensation in the breast which can be distinguished. 5. Measuring the waking temperature to notice the rise in woman’s basal body temperature which stays until the end of the cycle. The rise in temperature shows ovulation has taken place just before the rise in temperature. Thermometer is useful here.

Knowledge of the fertility period is very important in every family because, it helps one to accept self and manage it. The husband can understand some changes in the woman that comes with it. It deepens the relationship of husband and wife, the union, the oneness that should exist. The profound liberty of sex, pleasure at the safe period without fear of pregnancy and mutuality of the couples. The fertility

¹⁴⁸ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 42

awareness helps the family to plan for the child and the sex of the child hoped for. One feels guided by God instead of leaving things to chance. Childlessness is reduced. The family become self-reliant than only relaying on doctors and nurses.

A Teaching Outline for the Marriage Course on Conjugal Pleasures for Women

Introduction

Using Ingrid Trobisch book, “the Joy of Being a woman and what man can do,” on Sex Response which focuses on the woman, the writer and his wife wish to develop an outline on the subject of conjugal pleasures for women, the biology of such pleasures, when a woman is fertile (7 days each month), and what are the signs of her fertility? Sex, if well understood, harmonizes the family, brings joy as it binds the couples together. It is with dismay to discover that many families do not enjoy the God given pleasure of sex, either because they do not know how to or have been overcome by cultural back-grounds that have created some unpleasant teachings that scares the couples away from true discovery of sex in their home. Africa and in particular, Nigeria where the writer comes from, can testify that many women are living without the slightest of sex pleasure in their lives. They are either use to frustration, or are living enduring pains. Like Ingrid has given an example of a French author who expresses in a poem the suffering and fine torture of a wife who does

not reach sexual fulfilment in marriage.¹⁴⁹ It is actually strange in Africa to teach about sexual satisfaction of both the man and woman.

In sexual activities, many men may be unaware that their sexual act happens within a short time and they are done. While on the other hand, the woman's is deferent. Women need more time with a lot of touching and playing with her sensitive areas of her body to reach the experience of climax which is called orgasm. If the man do not know or refuses to help her reach the climax and abandon her, it is like "a wound that was quiet but has been pinched and left bleeding and uncared for."¹⁵⁰ Ingrid had said, "Longing for love and sexual desire are a unity for her and penetrate her whole being. That is why, when her sexual desire is fulfilled, she has almost supernatural strength."¹⁵¹ Men need to understand this facts so that practice of such pleasurable sex can bring about peaceful and good happy home. It brings about smooth and good communication that binds the family together.

Outline

1. Conjugal pleasures for women

What is conjugal pleasure?

What should be the relationship of a wife and husband?

- a. Where there is good sex
- b. Where there is no good sex

¹⁴⁹ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ The writer's personal experience.

¹⁵¹ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 11.

2. The biology of such pleasures

Definition of biology

- a. Analysis of woman's productive system (draw on board)
- b. Analysis of man's productive system

Women biology and pleasure

The use of clitoris in a woman's pleasure

- a. Play with it using your finger
- b. Wait for her to reach orgasm together

The kegel muscle-pubococcygeus muscle

- a. Tight and loose pubococcygeus
- b. Its effects on sexual pleasure
- c. Simple but amazing Exercise of the Kegel muscle.

Intercourse

- a. Man maintaining 5 minutes motionless ejaculation.
- b. Play with all her sensitive areas that you know

Coping with Sexual frustration

- a. Seek Marital counseling
- b. Discuss with a faithful, experience senior friend

Play on until her orgasm

- a. A woman gets satisfaction in playing with her body
- b. Playing with our bodies even after release especially if the wife's orgasm delays.
- c. Remain inside her

- d. Talk sought and sweet to her ear about of much you love and appreciate her.
3. When a woman is fertile (7 days each month)

The estrogen and the proterosterone

Woman's hormones and emotioins

Woman's cycle and ovulation

Conceiving a boy or girl
 - a. Sperm x and y (Man) and
 - b. The ovary x (Woman)
4. What are the signs of her fertility?
 - a. There is a wetness at the mouth of the vagina when the ovulation approaches. It is more profuse, clearer, and transparent and slippery discharge.
 - b. There is also a sharp pain in the lower abdomen of the woman. Igrid calls it mittelschmerz, or midpain. Caused by the congestion of the ovary as it is ready to ovulate.
 - c. There is the pinkish blood or spotting at the mouth of the vagina.
 - d. A day before ovulation, there is the feeling of prinking, tingling sensation in the breast which can be distinguished.
 - e. Measuring the waking temperature to notice the rise in woman's basal body temperature which stays until the end of the cycle. The rise in temperature shows ovulation has taken place just before the rise in temperature. Thermometer is useful here.

5. Work sheet

- a. How many days a month is a woman's fertility window open?

Answer.....

- b. How many days a month is a woman fertile?

Answer.....

- c. What are the biological signs of female fertility,

Answers 1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

- d. That a woman is ovulating? (Body temperature and mucus in the sexual organs). True or False

- e. If trying to conceive a daughter, when is the best time during a woman's seven day fertility cycle to make love? The answer is:

1. 1 or 2 days before ovulation,
2. 1 or 2 days after ovulation.
3. All of the above

- f. If trying to conceive a son, when is the best time during a woman's seven day fertility cycle? - The answer is:

1. On the day she is ovulating, which can be determined rather accurately. True or false

- g. What is most pleasurable for a woman immediately after the man has reached satisfaction?

6. Group discussion- Men group A and women group B.

Filling of the work sheet – answering the questions above, men separated from women. Giving room for free personal expression.

7. Group A and B together-Reading of the filled sheet, group by group.

- a. The researcher will read that of the men being a man and the wife of the researcher will read aloud that of the women. Then, have the men and the women each fill out their worksheets.

- b. Immediately thereafter, have them gather together as couples, and read aloud to each other what they wrote down. Or, might have them exchange worksheets, and have the men read the women's and the women read the men's

8. Few people and couples to share what they have learnt and possible resolutions reached in the process.

9. Conclusions/ remarks and closing.

10. Helpful website: www.newkidscenter.com

Fourth Session

How Marriage Course Correlates to 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5:21-40

The Church in Corinth paused several issues fuelled by the community life that was detrimental to the Church, we see Paul clearly addressing those issues. How did he do that, his major reference was the creation, God himself, why he made them male and female. It means He had a goal, to erase the loneliness of man and bring about mutual understanding. They were to live together and multiply. For the

fact that they were naked and no shame, they were to enjoy an unlimited intimacy together. We see The Marriage Course going back to the genesis account to establish the fact that God's intentions for marriage are not followed and when duly applied, the family never remains the same.

The relationship of husband and wife as co-equals indwell established by both then Marriage Course and the teachings of Paul. Our bodies are not to be protected against the desire of our partners except with mutual understanding which we both have to discussion. We listen to each other and try to reason with one another. The teaching on communication gives the couples that joy of sharing understanding.¹⁵² Couples have to try to understand themselves as they communicate.

The issue of love and respect cannot be over emphasizing. Paul addresses it in Ephesians 5:21-40. If the family can exercise these biblical principles, echoed by The Marriage Course, the family would have been seen following the intentions of God for creating marriage, and the couples themselves will have that harmony of life that comes from being bond together with a fellow human being in marriage.

Though the background of Paul's teachings and that of The Marriage Course are slightly different, there presentations are to the same target. It is aiming at correcting the unbiblical nature of our families. Some may know God personally through Jesus Christ, some may not but the bottom line is happiness and harmony at home.

¹⁵² Lee and Lee, *Marriage Book*, 45-57.

Addressing the African Nigerian Culture

The Nigerian Church in particular is faced with these marital problems whereby the family may not be experiencing that joy that suppose to come from marriage. Culture in a way has contaminated the principles that are guide and lead the family. The marriage course and the teachings of Paul will surely help in resolving some the issues. Issues like one man one wife has being treated in a way which goes against some of the African belief in many wives. The idea of many wives, naturally removes that effort of togetherness of one bond family. The lack of sexual satisfaction has been rebuked the teachings, some Africans only marry because of Children. To some sex especially men, is to satisfy themselves, women become like sex machines. Such attitude has to change based on the teachings of both Paul and the Marriage cause.

I like the way the Marriage course treated the issue of In-law. This is a high profile problem in Nigeria where the in laws, especially the mother in laws try to control the family of their Children. There has to be clear boundaries after marriage otherwise some African families will continue to suffer.

The Contextualization of the Marriage Course to Nigerian

For further study, the work of Walter and Ingrid Trobisch on renewing Marriages in the African Context was especially helpful. Here I include the reviews of their work in the following books: I Loved a Girl, I Married You, And the Joy of Being a Woman.

I Love a Girl

Walter Trobisch's books are important because he wrote them as one who has been in Africa. Most of what he wrote was actually experienced within the African culture. He was a missionary to Cameroon, West Africa. The problem of sex he encountered is typical of the Africans. As a manual writing to the Nigerian Church this document is very important. Things and events he encountered as he lived in Cameroon which shares boundaries with Nigeria. Reading through it, if you are an African, is not a shock at all. In fact some of us experienced it life. But to the west, it is indeed the pains of being a Christian. The frustration the Church pass through, the cultural norms on the Christian church even today cannot be quantified. These are events that happened many years ago, but I assure you these are still the events of today in many parts of Africa, even among some of the elite. That brings about the topic of the project.

Africa today is caught between three influences and each of them is very strong. The first is the western culture gotten through the media, overseas studies, magazines, music, films, books, and so on. But this change only promotes what comes not from God but the satisfaction of the desires of the flesh. Secondly, we talk about African culture which every child learns from birth to respect. Those who run to the city learn a culture that is mixed with the western life. "Africa today of today, caught ... between the backward pull of tribal tradition and the forward pressure of cultural change."¹⁵³ The third influence is the Church. Unfortunately for the Church,

¹⁵³ Walter Trobisch, *I Love a Girl: Private Correspondence between Two Young African's and Their Pastor* (New York, NY: Harper Chapel, 1965), v.

the circular world, freedom of will, life, once you go to school, you become different, and to copy the world's standard. One will like to be like others, and to be accepted by the peer groups. Gone are those days of Trobisch that François will be disciplined accept it and confide in the pastor. Such issues are still there but we don't hear them anymore because compromise has set in. we rather play to the dictates of the community to keep members of our congregations. Nobody wants to be offending anyone even if the scripture is contrary to what is being done.

It will interest you to know that the issue of dory has even increased. Like atrobish highlighted, "the drama centers around the traditional African custom of the 'bride-price.'¹⁵⁴ Women are more of being purchase as a property. In fact, when she has attended school, she is costlier. It is a right word to say "...compensation-gift"¹⁵⁵ when addressing the issue of bride- price. The parents of the girl feels they have suffered to take care of her for you so you have to earn her. Before it was farming for the parents of the girl for several years but today it has been monetized into cash. Many men today in Nigeria that I know cannot marry because they do not have the money to pay.

Like Trobisch points out and as I have indicated earlier, African marriage is more of giving birth to children, this idea actually brings about polygamy. He said "the overriding necessity that a man begets children, and especially sons, was the primary justification under the levirate system, which requires a man to marry his

¹⁵⁴ Trobisch, *I Love a Girl*, v.

¹⁵⁵ Trobisch, *I Love a Girl*, v.

brother's widow."¹⁵⁶ Though civilization has changed part of that culture to marry the brother's widow in some parts of the country, it is still being practice among some tribes in Nigeria. In most parts now, since you can't marry her as before, you have to provide for her but without conjugal experience. She stays under your jurisdiction until she decides or the family asks her to remarry.

Trobisch was really worried not knowing where to place 'love' in the African cultural marriage when he said as a pastor, "the pastor's difficult task is to justify the Christian ideal of love between man and woman in a cynical world that constantly taints and degrade and exploits."¹⁵⁷ True because who cares about love? The African is talking about children, sustainability of family lineage, and the issue of male child. Who cares about love? That is why many African do not choose their spouses, their families do. It is only the Church that has reduced such cultural behavior in away.

In the exchange of letters, issues were braised and trashed by Trobisch. Some of the issues included; sex before marriage to which Trobisch condemned firmly. He said "...the presence of a power does not imply that one should be guided by it, blindly and without restraint."¹⁵⁸ All the interactions about Francois' sexual activity with girl is really what happens in the African marital life. One is motivated by friend, couple with fact that we have been groomed that we are the men, we want to prove it. The unfortunate side is that some girls choose to know who is a real man. They are really for sex with those men. Is like they are proud too, to be identified as

¹⁵⁶ Trobisch, *I Love a Girl*, v.

¹⁵⁷ Trobisch, *I Love a Girl*, v.

¹⁵⁸ Trobisch, *I Love a Girl*, v.

capable of doing such a thing with men of power. You can imagine from the story of Trobisch, it is the brother of the girl that planned with the girl to have him. She invited him when her brother left. When I was between 14 and 16 years, as young as I was, I remember three women trying to lure me into sexual activities with them. When I could not on a day I was left alone in a room with her, my girl friend, who literally tried to have force me, she went out to tell my friends that, their friend was a death guy. Since that day I never had peace but tried to have a woman to confirm my man hold. What saved me was that I was a Pastor's child and had some fears, and did not know how to go about it; I would have been a victim today like Francois. These are some of the things that inform this topic of research.

Manhood is not seen the way Robisch thought of it in African culture. Those days, manhood goes along with the pride of being able to collect somebody's wife and runaway with, single men being able to snatch a girl from the market to his home by force or coercion or brainwashing. Then you peer group see you to be a strong tough guy. That is why polygamy was rampant. Thank God for Christianity and western influence of education. But in a way, those ideals are still hunting some Africans especially those who are still around undeveloped areas. Some their tribal sentiment still strong. You can imagine an Islamic group coming up to call themselves "Boko Haram"¹⁵⁹ which mean "Western Education is sacrilege," in another word, a taboo. This people claimed more than 900 live in 2012. In our modern age, the "the same finger that feed them, is called evil" that is a mentality one finds it difficult to

¹⁵⁹ Boko Haram is a set that comes from Islam claiming that western education is evil and a taboo in Northern part of Nigeria, who aim at killing people especially Christians to propagate there gospel.

explain, that reasonable people could actually come up with something like this.

That is to tell you that even now “it is not all the glitters are gold.”¹⁶⁰ The Church still has lot of work to do.

I Married You

Trobisch, with his stay in Africa and his experience related to his book “I like a Girl,” gave him, I think the foundation to write explaining the principles behind marriage which includes the Leaving, the cleaving, and the becoming one flesh in the bible. He made it clear that everything we need to know about marriage is in the bible, God speaking to us if we can just listen. He said “there is a very simple stamen about marriage in the Bible. It is simple and clear and yet very deep”¹⁶¹ the teaching in the scriptures can be understood by every human that can read, written in a direct simple language. Trobisch emphasis the problem is that we don’t listen. He puts it this way, “if we listen to this statement with an open heart, we will discover that God Himself is speaking to us.”¹⁶² This could imply that we are not ready to listen or read with open hearts. What looks simple then becomes a difficult thing. Or people just choose to blind their eyes and understanding of what God is saying since it does not suit them.

¹⁶⁰ Common saying in Nigeria to mean is not all you see that is exactly that, which you see.

¹⁶¹ Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 11 .

¹⁶² Trobisch, *I Married You*, 11.

“There can be no marriage without the leaving”¹⁶³ if you don’t leave your parent to meet your partner, then marriage has not been contracted. It has to do with the leaving. The issue might be who leaves, from the bible; it is the man, but implying that both the male and female leaves their parents and be united to each other. This is still a battle to be fought in African cultural understanding of marriage, because it is rather the woman that leaves her parents, having been purchased by the man by giving money and some defined items demanded by the family of the girl. She becomes the property of the family of the man. The cleaving and one flesh of marriage in the African context then become a problem to be looked into. I think the becoming one flesh to the African who honors culture would be limited to sex. But we all know it is more than sexual activities. The African Churches have the task to continue to teach and discourage these things we learned from birth that are not biblical.

The description of Trobisch of some beliefs of people concerning the position of women is typical of Africans, to many till date that is what they think and believe.¹⁶⁴ They are: that, men are more important than women, sons are more important than daughters, husband and wife relationship is like a possessor and his possession, just as the sower of the seed owns the soil into which he sows, childless marriage is as useless and senseless as a barren field, she fails in her destiny without a child, if no child bride price are returned, and many more that Trobisch could not

¹⁶³ Trobisch, *I Married You*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Trobisch, *I Married You*, 21-24.

say are true of the African cultural understanding of marriage which many still hold so strong but in disguise to those claiming to be Christian in the church today.

The African Pastor is faced with the challenge to correct this misconceptions concerning marriage. Those that are directly affected are the women. That is why you hear every day on the world news of women sexual abuses, domestic abuses, women human right abuses, and it looks like the Governments of such African country are mute, doing nothing tangible to correct and stop those abuses. You hear of “Rape” every day. Culture is part of the disease that needs to be cured. Most of our African marriages fall within the categories described by Trobisch¹⁶⁵. They are: 1. Empty marriage which shows couples married, have physical fellowship but no love. 2. The stolen marriage, which makes the two think they are in love with each other, they have sexual intercourse but they are not yet married. 3. The unfulfilled marriage which looks at the couple married legally, love each other and will never think of divorce, but in spite of this love, their physical fellowship remains unsatisfactory and unfulfilled. These are true descriptions of issues that affect the African cultural Christian marriage. The church may be a place of disguise to many who are still practicing such cruelty in their homes and still call themselves men and women of God.

There are about six test of love listed by Trobisch which I feel to just make a list of them here for better reference. The first is; sharing test. Real love wants to share, to give, to reach out. Secondly, the test of strength; Real love does not take

¹⁶⁵ Trobisch, *I Married You*, 37-43.

away strength; it gives new energy and strength instead. Thirdly, the respect test, no real love without respect, without being able to look to the other. Fourthly, the habit test, real love accepts the other one with his habits. Fifthly, the quarrel test, are we able to forgive each other and to give in to each other? In quarrelling, there must be the ability to reconcile. Sexily, the time test, a longer time of knowing each other is safer for the marriage. And sex is no test of love. Trobisch said "sex is no test of love, for it is the precisely the very thing that one wants to test which is destroyed by the testing."¹⁶⁶ Once the man has known a woman, what test of time do you observe again? That is the real test of love if he can stay away until is time to wed, after the wedding then they both enjoy the sex restricted and controlled for years.

Trobisch has addressed African pastors on an issue that is major problem of the African cultural treatment of women. We need to pick up the challenge and liberate our people from what seems to be good in the eye of an African man but deadly to the church, Christian marriages and homes, and damaging to the entire community of the civilized.

The Joy of Being a Woman

Ingrid Trobisch the writer approached this book from the angle of Ephesians 5:28 which say "he who loves his wife loves himself." Ingrid lay down some important aspect of the family. The sexual fulfillment, the fertility, the pregnancy, the childbirth, nursing, and the menopause and maternity. These items cover

¹⁶⁶ Trobisch, *I Married You*, 77.

everything about the experience of the woman in her home. Like her husband said in the forward of the book, "my wife seeks to bring together here that which belongs together. She showed that these realms of experience affect each other and are interrelated just like the cog wheel of a delicate instrument."¹⁶⁷ These issues affects the same person, they actually belong together. She did well as a woman who must have had such experiences too presents them as a witness. As she said, imagine you need a child after marriage but about three years none came in, who can tell about that experience? Only you, especially if one was an African. But she lived also in Africa, in Cameron for 12 years. She simply had a goal of helping the women love who they are, "a woman."

In her opening passages, Ingrid made it clear that a woman must accept being a woman. You will not be free in trying to be like a man.¹⁶⁸ At the root of all things lies the act of accepting myself. One must agree to be who God made you to be. One must accept the qualification one has and the limitations set for him. Accepting these provides courageous basis for life.¹⁶⁹ Lack of accepting equally becomes a rejection of what God has created us to be. It will never allow you to come to fulfillment in life. We are peculiarly made for God's peculiar reasons for us. She related acceptance with particular emphasis on the body acceptance. Acceptance of a woman to some degree is physical self-acceptance. This makes me

¹⁶⁷ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, ix.

¹⁶⁸ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Trobisch, *Being a Woman*, quoting Romano Guardini, "Die Annahme seiner Selbst" (werkbuch, wuertzburg, 1969), 14.

reflect over the African woman who always want to bleach herself to look like the westerners even today. They are not satisfied with their color of skin, black. They want to look lighter. What a rejection of self and God in His infinite creation who decide who we are and what we are. Today's painting of the lips, the eyes, and any other part of the body so desired by the person, including men, today, is a clear indication of lack of accepting self.

The writer, Ingrid, talks about the response of women to sex. She made it clear that sex is not only for the husband's joy. It is for both husband and wife. Like in some parts of Africa, based on the cultural understanding, it has made women to feel and believe that sex is only for the man to enjoy and for children. No! it is a pleasure for both. The African must learn daily this fact so as to help families enjoy the blessing of God in marriage. This actually the reason many Africans don't know how to play with their wives before sex and before ejaculation. They just go into her release the semen and off they go. This has hurt and damages many African women. The woman is forced to cope with sexual frustration, she eventually had to get use to it because it is a societal problem coming from cultural setting of the community, an individual is not important but the whole life of the community.

Ingrid went ahead to tell us how to take care of each other during pregnancy and childbirth. They are very fundamental to any happy family. We in Africa, who only see women as sex and children machines, need to learn that it is a corporate responsibility to care for the child right from the womb, birth and throughout the child's years of dependency. The mother who bears the much pains, must be given special attention at this period. We are to work together as team not separate individuals.

With the Cultural undertone of marriage in Nigeria, it makes the situation so complex so that there are some areas that are still left hanging which must be treated. They are the major cause of lack of peace and harmony in most African Nigerian Christian families. There is the need to import what The Marriage Course has not addressed like:

The lower valuing of women. Our women like I have noted earlier are seen as less than men in the community. Their importance is only for sex and to give birth to children. They ridicule, maltreated, and are treated violently in some cases. Many women do not go to school, and if they do, they may not finish because the man sees her school as a waste because she is meant to marry. She belong to somebody else not the family.

The Valuing of male children especially the first born male child. Indeed if an African woman only gives birth to female children, she is likely to go and another wife taken, who will bring to the family “the man.” Right from birth, male children grow believing that all women, including their mothers are lower beings and under their authority. That a woman cannot give orders, she serves the man. These and many more are clearly unbiblical and must be treated. The sons are elevated beyond measure.

In as much as the marriage Course teachings bring correctives even to subjects The Marriage Course does not address again, the lower valuing of women, women in slavery to in-laws. Women in Nigerian culture primarily, are not married to their husbands but the man’s family. This give the man’s family right to treat her they way they want. There are incidences were the man’s brothers will even beat her for any reason. This needs to be addressed. It must be clear to all the both

families that this is a separate new home devoid of any family attachments. They man and woman being one treats both their families on the same scale, based on their discretion.

Though the Marriage Course treated the issue of communication of husband and wife, in our African context the woman doesn't have an opinion in the first place. There is that need for men in African Nigerian homes to know that they are co-equals at home and each person's opinion is important and must be given a chance to be heard.

The issue of Christian husband behaving one way in the Church and another way at home. Holding cultural principles at home and when they come to Church they preach and act as people who put the bible first at home. The issue must be address contextually. Many don't feel is a problem anymore because culture has taught them that and the Church seems to be quiet about it. Therefore every husband does whatever he wants at home and in the Church may even be an elder.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

The Project

The project is aimed at introducing Christian principles of marriage into Christian marriage compromised by cultural norms that degenerate women. There will be a workshop and then a seven session course based on the marriage course by Alpha which will be contextualized for the African use.

Five couples of reputable conduct and involvement in the service of the Lord, mostly, who have served either as an elder in the church or a leader were selected for a workshop, interviews and the marriage course program. Hearing about the program, three other families indicated their interest, because of their maturity, where they come from within the country, they were accommodated for diversity of experience. Therefore the list of selected couples rose to eight from the initial plan of five couples. Interestingly, their spouses are strong members of the Women fellowship groups of their various Churches.

The names of the selected people will not be their actual names. The writer decided to give them other names to identify them properly in this paper. Therefore the couples selected for the program are from different parts of Nigeria. The writers wish that they represent the cultural views of those areas. Nigeria is normally divided into three geographical areas and three major languages. We have the East represented by Ibo language, the South represented by Yoruba language and the North represented by Hausa language. Recently, one major geographical location with distinct dialects of about 350 has come up to be known as the middle Belt. They

occupy the central area of Nigeria where the new capital of Nigeria is located, Abuja. The names below cover all these areas and can adequately represent those cultures.

Mr. and Mrs. Bitrus B. Maiduguri

The family has been married for the past 40 years. They got married at the time when the parents were the once who determine or negotiate for the wife a man should marry. The man and woman needed not to know who they were going to marry. The parents made every arrangement. Both of them are old now but without children because they lost all of them in a car accident yet they have remained together till date.

Mr. and Mrs. John J. Agwanga

The family has been married for the past 20 years. God has blessed them with two boys. The husband has been an elder in ECWA church for more than twelve years. The wife is from a different tribe and different state with different cultural background. She has equally served as the Women Fellowship leader for 6 years. For the two people marrying their culture together become interesting, it takes the hand of God for the family to live together in harmony.

Mr. and Mrs. James Y. Kaduna

The family has been together for the past 27 years. They come from central Nigeria that has several cultural and tribal believes within 350 tribes in a single geographical location in Nigeria. The man has been an elder and secretary of an ECWA Church for about 18 years. His experience as a Christian leader and husband

will represent many of the Christians in Nigeria. They have actually experience some crisis that needed intervention.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Akure

This family has been married for the past 36 years. God has blessed them with five children. Two boys and three girls. They come from a tribe that believes so much in culture especially as regard to the relationship of wife to in-laws and the giving birth of a male child as against the birth of a female child. The position of the man is held extremely higher than that of the woman. They come around the Southern part of Nigeria. He has had the attitude of beating up the wife, children are scared of him. In fact he believes that the woman is just like a property in the home. Has is a lowly position and owns nothing. He most always be in control and must do things as a man alone, e.g. buy a car, building family house etc.

Mr. and Mrs. Hosea Dikko

They are within their three years of marriage but they have not been able to conceive. Not having a child within the first year of marriage life in Africa is a terrible experience. Children seems to be the reason of marriage in most of the Nigerian people, lack of it is like living hell among your colleagues, your in-laws, your parents and society at large. This has made some pastors make money by brain washing such couples follow them for prayers after which they will pay for prayers offered to them. Such pastors have always preached that “barrenness is a course” therefore making those families guilty of not giving birth.

Mr. and Mrs. Lucky I. Enugu

This family has been married for the past 16 years. They come from the Eastern part of the Country where everything about them is completely surrounded by the belief in culture. Every activity especially marriage and deaths, are culturally controlled. Here the community is the one that determines what happens in day to day life and family life, neither the family nor individual and whatever the elders who control the community says is final.

Dr. and Mrs. Paul I Abia

They come from the same area as number 6. He is important because his family is at the verge of separation because of some cultural family problems that seems to be beyond what he can bear. If they can attend the sessions and workshop that could help amend their family together than separation which seems to be the final decision of both parties.

Mr. and Mrs. Ezra G. Yobe

This family has been married for about 10 years now. They have been very active members of the Church from the North-eastern part of the country. This is a place where you can find both Muslims and Christians from the same family. Is either the family is a Muslim and the mother Christian or the other way round. Both religion influences their homes. It will normally take a very strong believer in the word of God to stand his ground on what he believes is right based on the Biblical teachings.

The Interview with the Couples

Having sought the consent of the Couples mentioned above, a workshop was organized to primarily discuss with each couple alone to help me and the couples reflect over their understanding of their home before going in to the sessions. First, the researcher met with the woman, the wife and then the man, husband separately to allow them free flow of discussion and release of information for me to identify how each of them feels about their home. At the final slot, I met with both of them. This made the discussion awesome. Some of the major questions discussed are listed below, other questions were raised in the process for clarity that are not mentioned

- What was your understanding of marriage before you got married to your spouse? What do you think it is now? What is your idea of biblical marriage?
- If you have another chance, will you still marry your spouse? Why do you say so? Do you love, respect and value your spouse?
- Do you see yourself one and equal in home with your spouse?
- How much time do you spend together? Are you satisfied with it?
- How often do you communicate with each other? How would you like it to be?
- What is your understanding on handling family resources? Do you keep same account? How do you think it should be?
- How do you handle conflicts in your home? What happens or what do you do when you are hurt and angry with your spouse?
- How has your sexual relationship or life been with your spouse? Do you see sex just for procreation? Can you explain please?

- What do you think about the position of children in your home or marriage? What do you think about the male child and female child? How would you feel if you do not have a child? How would you feel if your children are all females?
- What has been your understanding of the relationship of in laws to your family? How much of influence do they have on your family in terms of cultural norms that must be kept that may not necessarily build biblical home you ought to have?¹

These and many auxiliary questions were discussed with the eight couples that were in attendance before the real session of the Alpha course. By auxiliary the writer means the questions that came up in the process of the discussion to bring more clarity of thoughts.

The Discussion before the Eight Sessions

It is worth noting that the style of meeting with couples differently was strategic because the couples spoke freely expressing their actual experience of their homes. Meeting with the wife alone and the husband alone gave it a wonderful flavor were both parties were not hiding anything that they would have naturally kept quiet. They were so free. In fact by the time I brought them together there wasn't much to talk about. Also nobody wanted the other spouse to know the answer to the question, if you are given another chance, will you marry your spouse?

¹ See Appendix 2.

Who answered negative. Those who answered positive reluctantly answered positive to the hearing of their spouse. It was a nice time of interaction.

The question seeking to know their understanding of marriage before they got married had a unanimous response. The entire participant stated clearly that they believed it was a great happy relationship that lasts forever. That the friendship and courtship loving and caring for one another were going to be more as they lived together. Some of them said that, “on the day of marriage they felt a relief do whatever they liked together” but that they gradually notice it was not happening the way they thought. One of the woman interviewed said, “it was amazing that things change around and my husband could actually beat me even when I am pregnant but the good news is he has long changed.”² This is how many Nigerians feel at first stage of marriage after which the culture distorts and rob the joy of those Christian homes that are not consistent and obedient to the word of God. To most of the couple’s home or marriage is a complete difference from what they used to have as courtship and dreamed that marriage would be more caring and loving.

Asking to know the possible reasons to that shape difference, three participants blamed it at the couple’s familiarity, unlike when they were still apart. Five respondents blame it at the lack of proper counseling before they went into marriage; six people assured me that the basic reason is because most the Christian families have deliberately refused to follow the foundations of the Bible. That if we

² Thomas A Akure. That was the wife expressing her pains which she could not discuss with any body before. Because it will be hell in the house if the husband should hear that, even if it were before their Pastor, she dare not. The good thing was that has long changed.

all leave our pride and selfishness, the home can be a better place. Two women agitated for the fact that the culture of the people will not allow total submission to the word of God concerning marriage, otherwise there should never be problems to hinder the happiness, and otherwise why did God instituted marriage?

Everyone could recognize that God instituted marriage so that they will comfort each other. Eliminate loneliness and become help mates. Every one could see vividly that it has been abused, it has not been practiced.

Here comes a very critical question that each of the couples kept mute for some moments to respond to. The question was, if you have another chance, will you still marry your spouse? This was really intriguing; each person I asked the question looked at me downhearted on what to say. Seven out of the eight women interviewed said, as it is usually said in Nigeria to show preference to accommodate what you know or have than what you don't have and may not know the outcome, "Better the Devil I know than the Angel I do not know."³ This statement does not necessarily indicate positive choice but the fear of the unknown. In another word, since they do not know the future, it will be better to put up with the present spouse than to get into the hand of the worst one.

Three women were completely positive. They will surely marry their husbands again. Three women vehemently affirmed that it will be better to try another husband. It was really amazing to hear that. It became clear to me as they begin to explain their ordeals it became clear that it will be natural for them to wish

³ Amazingly, all the seven women used the same expression. This shows the fear of uncertainty not that they enjoyed it or would not like another option if aware of the possible outcome.

for another husband. One of the women was actually indifferent. But that is understood because they are just in their three years of marriage. The men had no problem in answering yes to marrying their present wives with the exception of one man, who believes the wife is really terrible and is not ready to change. That said if he must marry her again, he will better stay alone. This was really bad situation and I hoped that the program will help them to adjust as they adhere to the biblical principles of marriage.

On the question of equality at home, it was clear that all the women never saw themselves equal to the man with exception of one. They confirmed that they have been told right from childhood, they are to serve man. They were meant to be in the kitchen. Some of them said, doing marriage they were particularly told to respect the man and submit to him in everything and in fact, this extends to the husband's family, especially the men within the family. Such mentality made them to get use to a lowly position. So to them, it is a normal life for a woman not to be equal to man. Any alteration makes one feels guilty. The woman that believed she is equal to the man comes from around the eastern part of the country. She believes nothing that makes a man different from her. She is working like the man does and she is created in the image of God too. Two men completely disagree that a woman can ever be equal to man. That even in creation, man was created first and it was her weak vessel nature that led man to sin. In strength they are weak and even in endurance. That man has been made the head by God so how can it be that they are equal to a woman? Five of the men believed that to some extent they are equal. That is when talking about creation, being in the image of God, when you talk of individual being, yes we are one. But that in the issues of marriage God has given the

man leadership and headship. Man is the one that provides for the home, he must be the one that takes the final decision if at all the woman has a say. From the question only one man believes that man and woman are equal in everything before man and God. That leadership or headship does not mean inequality in any way, but a role, just as women have their own role to play.

How much time do you spend together and are you satisfied with it? This question is vital because if people look staying together, it means they appreciate and value one another. The oldest man among the group clearly pointed out that his wife has been his companion otherwise, when they lost their sons, it would have been hell for him. He would not have survived it alone. Two more men and their wives were positive. The family is always together. The rest of the people were not satisfied. One family's situation was back. They do not have time to talk, play, and when they are together, everyone is on his own. Severally, when she initiates a play, a talk, he had shown it. Surprisingly, the wife is the opposite of him. She loves to stay around, play, laugh and talk. This is something important to take note. Our families must stay together, play together. Really some cultures in Nigeria clearly encourage it. They believe the wife has an inferior position so must not stay were men are talk more of playing.⁴ This attitude is typical of some of the African culture. To some extremes, the man and woman come close only when they want to have sex for procreation. That is why some married men in Nigeria especially the Northern part

⁴ It is like a master with his servant. The servant can only come close when invited and usually slowly and in fear.

have rooms for each of their wives or wife. They only come to the same bed with man only for sex.

How often do you communicate with each other was to help the researcher see if there is that desire of each other by the couples. Communication also shows that many problems are resolved before they get bad. A family that opens the gates of communication stays together and feels the absence of each other dearly. From the group interviewed, five families indicated they have good communication but would need more improvement. One family was like, they don't talk at all. The family is reaching a level of being suspicious of each other and scared of each other. The remaining two actually communicate below average. The women seem to like to communicate, but the men are the obstacle to good communications, either because of work or naturally being reserved.

What is your understanding of handling family resources? Do you keep same account? Was the major focus here? From the entire group only two families keep same account and spend their money and use their resources together. It became so clear that the men were the up-tackles in five families who would not like their spouse to even have a hint on what they earn or have. They alleged that the woman will be too demanding until the money gets finished so is better she does not know. In such families, it became so glaring that they will be asking of loan from one another and would insist such loans are paid. At the other hand the women were ready to use their resources together. Let pause to say that, in Nigeria, the truth is that all the money a woman will make spends most of it buying things for the family use which includes the husband. On the other hand the man many times only take care of himself and only consider buying only necessary things like food mostly. One

family was like in the middle of the whole issue. In some things like money, everybody keeps it but when need arises then they seat to negotiate how much each of them will bring.

How do you handle conflict in your home? What do you do when you are hurt and angry? No family can stay without problems that need wisdom to resolve them. We are all created differently and we had different backgrounds and upbringing. From two to become one, it takes maturity as we settle our short comings in love and desire to grow together. The families that do not easily seat to discuss, it was obvious that the wife has chosen to get use to the man like that. She said "Settling problems becomes difficult since you will not know that is in the man's heart."⁵ The oldest family among us made it certainly that the aggrieved person makes the first move seeking audience to talk over the issues. Five families testify that they don't know what happens but in one way or the other they solve their problems. Sometimes, they just overlook the issue. This can be dangerous actually because the day something will happen that may not be overlooked, all those once that have been piled up will boost and could be difficult to handle. Two families said they normally wait till in bed that they talk over their issues and either one can initiate the talk.

How has your family sexual life being? Do you see sex as for procreation only? The responses were remarkable. All the women agreed in their responses that they do not enjoy sex but they do it anyway because they do not want fight. The

⁵ The family of Dr Paul Abia. Note this name represents the real person that said it. So it is not the actual given name of the woman who said this.

discussion shows that women overwork themselves while men seat and relax. From morning she wakes up to bath the children, prepare breakfast, cleans the environment, put water for the man to bath, wash dishes and the man does nothing only to eat and bath. As the man leaves to work, so the woman does. They may come back at the same time, but in most cases the woman must be home to prepare dinner, bath the children and if they have not eaten lunch she prepares it, the man will come back expecting worm welcome from the wife, she will offer him water to drink, prepare water for him to bath, continuous with the cooking, serves the food, wash the dishes, clean the house, bath the children for night rest, and she sleeps last. With all this activities, in the night the man will demand sex. One of them asked, "Are we not human beings too? Are we machines? Even machines can breakdown therefore it needs rest."⁶ The other issue the women complained is that, the men don't even care to play with them so that they themselves will enjoy it "...but they only come and go when we are just beginning to like it and you don't have the right to insist."⁷ Sex therefore to the woman becomes like there is no need because it ends up not in pleasure but pains. Observing the men, the researcher could notice that the men are busy people because of the type of work they do, which can in itself affect sexual relationship of the couples if not well managed.

Five men testified of their coming home late and tired. Sometimes "I start sleeping right from the seating room without eating and even taking my bath, but

⁶ Lamented by the wife of Mr. John Agwanga.

⁷ Lamented by the wife of Mr. John Agwanga.

they should understand now because at least I have given her five children”⁸ To this man, it seems marriage is all about children. To get men to be helping the women becomes a hard thing to do even among Christian leaders who know the teachings of the bible. They do not see the home as helping and supporting one another but the woman’s job. Given by whom? The obvious answer from the Nigerian context is culture.

What do you think about the position of the children in your marriage? What do you think about the male child and female child? Which one do you prefer to come first? How do you feel if you do not have a child and or if they are all females? This was a serious question because some of the answered it biblically while style having some preferences in mind. Two of the men sincerely noted that if there is no child and if there is no male child, then there is no family. And if not because of church he could marry another wife for a child or a male child.⁹ Five participants admitted the temptation of believing that children are the first priority of marriage, but it is not. So whether there is a child or not it does not matter much because children are a reward from the Lord. Equally same on whether is a male child or female, both are given by God alone. It is the African misconception of life that makes culture values children and in particular male children as against female children. They admitted that culture should not rule us only what God says. One family who has been married for about three years without a child actually shared

⁸ Thomas A Akure.

⁹ It was not surprising because the two people come from the area in the eastern part of Nigeria that culture takes preeminence over the bible and the church. They are; Dr Paul Abia and Judas Lucky (true names altered).

their pains. They lamented on how their parents, in laws, family members, and friends are making them to feel bad, making them feel children are the most important reason for marriage. In fact they confessed some Christians and pastors who tell them that “barrenness is a course” and that they have to attend deliverances to have children. The family seems to be focused on God and have not allowed them to be carried away.

What has been your understanding of the relationship of in-laws to your family? This is one of the areas that the family can have problem especially if the man refused to be biblical in his home. The women were outspoken here because they are the once that suffers mostly in the hand of the mother in-laws. One family had serious problem because the in-laws have been the one influencing the wife negatively and is presently at the verge of collapsing. According to the man both the mother and her brothers have taken over his house. This actually, is a peculiar case because it used to be the opposite that is the family of the man pestering the wife not the other way round. One couple had lost both the parents so they have been relieved of that problem. The couple those three years old in marriage actually testified to the disturbing nature of his in-laws. But that is limited to the fact that they have not had an issue yet. In the African Nigerian nature, we believe once married, the next one year, you must have given birth. If that does not happen, not all can bear it. The woman is frustrated by the in-laws as if she is the cause. Chronic cases, the parents of the man will marry another wife for him or force him to do it himself. Four families do not have problem of in-laws majorly because their parents were God fearing believers. One last family had problems of in-laws maltreating his

wife because they were staying in the same compound but after relocating to Abuja, the problem “died natural death”.

Twelve Sessions with the Couples:

Workshop- Interviews and Discussions

As already discussed above, was what preoccupied the first session of the meeting. We all had to introduce each others, give a brief summary of what we are expecting to happen and a sharing of the time table of program of activities.¹⁰ This was a one hour thirty minutes meeting but because of the interest and questions that were coming up, the house decided to extend the meeting with another thirty minutes. Every couple was actually excited to be part of this program.

Family Life in 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5

The second meeting was dedicated to looking at the bible to first see what God through His apostle, Paul had to say concerning marital issues. What was in God’s mind when He instituted marriage and what was Paul’s corrective exposition on marriage? As discussed in this paper in chapter two while giving the theological reflections on Paul’s understanding of marriage found in first Corinthians 7 and Ephesians chapter 5:21-33.

¹⁰ See Appendix 2.

The Contrast between Biblical Notions of Marriage and the Nigerian Context

In the third session, we focused on the African Nigerian context of marriage. We looked at all the geographical locations of Nigeria. In the Northern part of the Country, their system of marriage is Islamic in nature. They could marry four wives to fulfill the Quran or their religious obligations. The way they treat their children. This was important because in Nigeria, they are the ones that go round the city begging. Mostly, they don't go to school but go to sit under a "mallam"¹¹ to be taught Quran. The southern part of the country, the Yorubas who have a rich culture of valuing children in marriage especially "Okunrin"¹² (male child). Many women have been beating because of that, while many have married other women, or committed adultery because they want a male child. This also allows great influence of in-laws. The Eastern region is also similar in cultural control of home. In their case, a family does not take decisions, not even the parents but the community via the elders who have the final say in all family matters. The surprising issue here is that many Easterners that are strong believers fall victims of this cultural control of family. The bible is therefore secondary in issues of marriage as far as they are concerned.

In Middle Belt, that is the central part of Nigeria, we have more than 350 tribe and dialects. There are many similarities when it comes to major cultural beliefs, yet there are diversities. We all looked at them as Nigerians comparing them with the standard of the bible already discussed.

¹¹ They are like their guidance who teach them while young how to memorize the Quran and then send them to the street to beg for alms.

¹² An entire family can have no peace until a child is born. They also prefer, with all sincerity and struggle, that the first child should be a man who will take over the family.

We reflected on some of the African Nigerian areas of cultural influence on our marriages as discussed in the introduction, which included:

- Men act one way in the church and another way at home.
- Women do not have power to say anything at home.
- How men relate to their children.
- Disrespect from the sons to the Mothers.
- Preferential treatment for the first born son and all the males.
- Disrespect of the daughters by both the fathers and the sons.
- The problem of in-laws in the Nigerian context.
- The introduction of the Marriage Course

We were then ready for the Marriage Course. This took us seven sessions in all which included:

1. Building strong foundations.
2. The art of communications
3. Love in action
4. Resolving conflict
5. The power of forgiveness
6. Parents and in-laws
7. Good sex.

The eighth one has to do with coping with times of divorce or separation. This was not needed because the researcher felt they should not be introduced to something that is not desirable. Nigeria does not know much about separation because every couple knows that the marriage is forever, and with the cultural influence,

divorce or separation is a shameful thing that makes the community looks down on you as immoral person.

The issues have been discussed earlier in chapter three.

The marriage course materials were used but contextualized to our Nigerian culture. The presentation was revised and contextualized too. The presenter served as the facilitator, leading and guiding the discussion. Then he reads through the manual some relevant passages, allows moments of interaction between husband and wife alone to look into their family matters alone, then call every once attention to continue as a group. There was no much individual group interaction since this course was intended for husband and wife to look into their home alone. Nonetheless, opportunity was given for anyone who had any thing he or she would like to share for the benefit of others willingly. In the midway into the session, five minutes was given for break to help relax every one.

Marital Counseling Principles

Believing that the Nigerian Christian families have heavily been dominated by culture and many do not have the time to seat down for a formal seminar like the one we had, the researcher developed brief principle of counseling to help mature believers, teachers, pastors, who must have gone through the marriage course to help counsel many families and individuals that are confused out there by not necessarily having to seat down for hours to listen to teaching. That counseling program can be located in chapter three of this project.

Workshop- Interviews and Discussion

Having gone through the whole program with the couples not missing any of the sessions, they were remarkable. It was awesome. Every participant in the first was now thinking on how others could be helped to understand the biblical imperatives of marriage as taught by Alpha course. It became clearer that some couples are actually living by cultural dictates of the past learned from childhood. People practice them without even knowing it.

Out of the eight couples I had the course with; one of them could not allow the program to help them adjust their positions. They were still threatening divorce. They both were insisting that they can't stay together any more as husband and wife. It became clear that the enemy has gone deep into this family through in-laws. They need prayers and will still counsel them.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

Reflection and Effect of the Marriage Course

In this chapter, the writer will be reflecting over the twelve sessions he had with the couple for a period of one Month. The writer here wishes to discuss each family before the program and after the sessions completed. Again, the names use here are not actual names of the participants, they only represent them.

Mr. and Mrs. Bitrus Maiduguri

This family has been married for over forty five years. During those years they were blessed with children which they lost in a ghastly car accident, they lost all of them. The family remained together and were relating very well. Hearing of this program, they picked interest. They believe is that, they can still learn something that will make their family better. They shared openly with other how they were able to stand strong at the lost of all their children in one single car accident. They explained that their love and believe in each other, close relationship, doing things together kept them moving happily as a family till date. That they have learned to recognize each other's weaknesses and working at helping each other overcome them. The man clearly states, "culture as we have learned from the course, is the number one destroyer of Christian home in our country, therefore, I am advising you the young couples to refute them an let your community identify you to be a man of

your word.”¹ This statement to me was remarkable and an evidence that the course really achieve the aim.

The family expressed their desire and willingness to get the Course material so that he will use it in his church since he and his wife are members of the counseling committee of their church.

Dr Paul Abia

After the season has been completed, the family were always quiet. On the last day, the man called me aside to confess that, the training clearly pointed out his mistakes. That his wife’s people have so much influence on his wife that he does not believe their marriage can hold any longer. He clearly said, “Pastor, I am sorry if this might pain you. You have taught us well from the bible, but I can’t marry my wife any more, we can’t stay together because I am afraid of her. Her people have been trying to take all my businesses, she has even transferred all my money into her account, I can’t bear it because one day, she might kill me. I only beg for one thing, if I remarry they can put me under discipline but let me take Holy Communion.”² It was a hard decision. I encouraged him and promise to have a special time with them together. At the other hand, the wife seems not to be bothered by anything. I have to pray and work on the family alone. The good thing is, they all recognized that it is not the right

¹ Biturs Maiduguri.

² Dr Paul Abia speaking to me alone. After the program. One could see pain and seriousness.

way they are living and they know quite well the consequences of any decision they take.

John Agwanga

The family have been prominent in the church both of them have serve as leaders in the church. The man is a quiet and loves to be reserved but the woman as the type loves talking and joking around. Their family was faced with how both of them will adjust especially the husband. Who does not like playing around? The man clearly confessed his weakness and hopes to make positive changes. In the area of money and other resources, they admitted that every keeps his money especially but that after the lessons, they will prefer using all their resource together. The wife said “if truly we are one as husband and wife, there is no good reason for any family not to operate things together.”³ I see this reaction showing that it was, indeed, a fruitful program.

James Kaduna

He indicated that they have been living separately because of work and only meets in weekends periodically. He confesses that this has affected them in many areas of marriage life, to the point that they became suspicious of each other, especially the man who works in sport department. The man promised to approach the authority for possible transfer of the wife back to Abuja where he works, or at

³ Mrs. John Agwanga.

worst, the family could join her there. He now believes too that women must be treated as co-equals and must be helped in the domestic work than man just sitting down. He also confesses that, sometime women are the cause of making a man remains thinking of himself higher than the woman. He gave a scenario where he wanted to help the wife do some domestic work but she refused. That people will say she has charmed him. The wife responded that, it takes only people who understand the bible and are ready to live it else our community will misinterpret the gesture that is biblically normal to do. "Culture is what we fear not that we don't want it."⁴ All were full of promises to try to do the right thing despite cultural influences.

Thomas Akure

The program was so touchy that this elder had to come and confess to me that he used to beat his wife. That culturally, a woman does not have a say in the family. He also believes it is the absolute responsibility for the man to provide everything so that his manhood be maintained. Wow! It was revealing to hear an elder talking sincerely. In fact, before me, he apologizes to the wife for all the wrongs done to her and promised that that was the end of all those mistreatment. They were actually born from what I was taught as a child and in our culture. She could understand because they are coming from the same cultural background but his case was extreme.

⁴ Mrs. James Kaduna during our last session.

Hosea Diko

A young couple of three years and coming from different cultural background, and for three years without a child. They confessed, this was for them, that they are the once to enjoy it mostly. They pledged to follow the bible carefully as they overcome some of the pressure of no child.

Judas Lucky

A man and family from the eastern part of the country. He admitted that the teachings were correct as a lawyer, but that they need prayers because there area is leaving by the dictates of the community elders not even their parents. One must choose one, "God and suffer from the community of community and then offend God."⁵ He admitted that there are areas he will still struggle with them but may be with time could be overcome.

Ezra Yobe

A current serving elder in the Church. They only express joy for attending the program because it has help mend some areas of their family struggles. The man encouraged that, "does a man really have any choice? No except if he is an unbeliever"⁶ the point he was making is that Christians don't have any option else they are disobedient to God directly. His appeal is that every Christian must make

⁵ Judas Lucky a Lawyer by profession in Nigeria.

⁶ Ezra Yobe.

efforts daily to become more like Christ at home, church, work, everywhere and it will never be easy. It is not matter of choice to a believer.

Conclusion

Reforming culturally mandated marriage norms Using Equitable Biblical Modality: A Pastoral Course for Nigerian Christians. The topic was burn out of the desire to see the Nigerian Christian living out the bible at home with their wives just as they claim in public square, the Church. The project therefore introduced Christian principles of marriage into existing Christian marriages compromised by cultural norms that denigrate women. Therefore a workshop of six sessions, a seven session course based on the Marriage Course by Alpha was organized.

Specific people were invited for this program because they are married within the African Nigerian context and also being a believer in one of the ECWA Churches some of which were elders at one time or other. This made their experience of marriage based on biblical principles to help others have a Christian home devoid of negative cultural influence. A counseling program was also prepared to help those who may not be able to organize a program like ours still have the opportunity to influence positively those who will come to them for advice. To the best of my knowledge as I read the outcome, it was successful.

Recommendation

This is a Pastoral course for the Nigerian Christians that is not to say it will not be use for everyone. It is a program for the Church, though written in the African context. This program is recommended for all elders and pastors. If they can

withstand cultural influence in their homes, the other members will follow suit. The leader must serve as an example for others to follow. You can't tell people to do what you don't do. It will be appropriate too if this course can be taught to our students from the Pastoral schools. This will help them take care of their homes before getting to pastoral work.

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VITA

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I have written many unpublished articles, conducted several seminars covering Marital Issues, Leadership, Preaching, Counseling, etc. I have been a part time Teacher since 15years ago with ECWA Theological Seminary Jos and ECWA Theological Institute Karu FCT. I Wrote my BA Thesis on; The Biblical Teaching on Speaking in Tongues in First Corinthians 12-14. In my MA project, I wrote on

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I started work with Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in August 1991. I have served on Leadership positions in many areas. I was the Student President at ECWA Theological Seminary in 1990 to 1991. The Captain and Organizer, 1980-1992. I served as the Education officer (CEO) ECWA Abaji Local Church Council and Teacher "Rashin Bible School Abaji", 1991-1993; The ECWA Local Church Council Secretary Idu-Karmu 1994-1996; the ECWA Assistant District Church Council Secretary Garki Abuja FCT 1997-2003; ECWA Acting Local Oversea Maitama Kubwa Local Church Council 2003/2004; ECWA Garki District Church Council Chairman 2009 to 2016; The Chairman of ECWA 15 District Church Councils' Fellowship (GADA) 2009-2016; The Treasurer ECWA 40 District Church Councils' Fellowship (GWAPLAZA) 2009-2016.

I have had few awards which includes; Award of excellent Service: Centennial Celebration of Christianity in Abuja and Environs; Award as Pillar of Faith in recognition of outstanding contributions and service to Humanity, by Christian Association of Nigeria Women Wing; and ECWA DCC, Abuja Stewardship Award for immense contribution to the service of God as Chairman Garki DCC 2009-2016.

I am presently involved in a voluntary service With the United Nigeria Chaplaincy Nasarawa Chapter, 1915 to date.